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Maureen Duffy on Culture & the State; Washington Diary
Children's books; Children's theatre; Adult decadence

Universities and free speech

GOODBYE TO ALL THAT?

'I believe we can yet achieve, and I intend to pursue, the objectives on which we all agree — a safer, more secure and stable world'

Ronald Reagan

Photo: Rex Features

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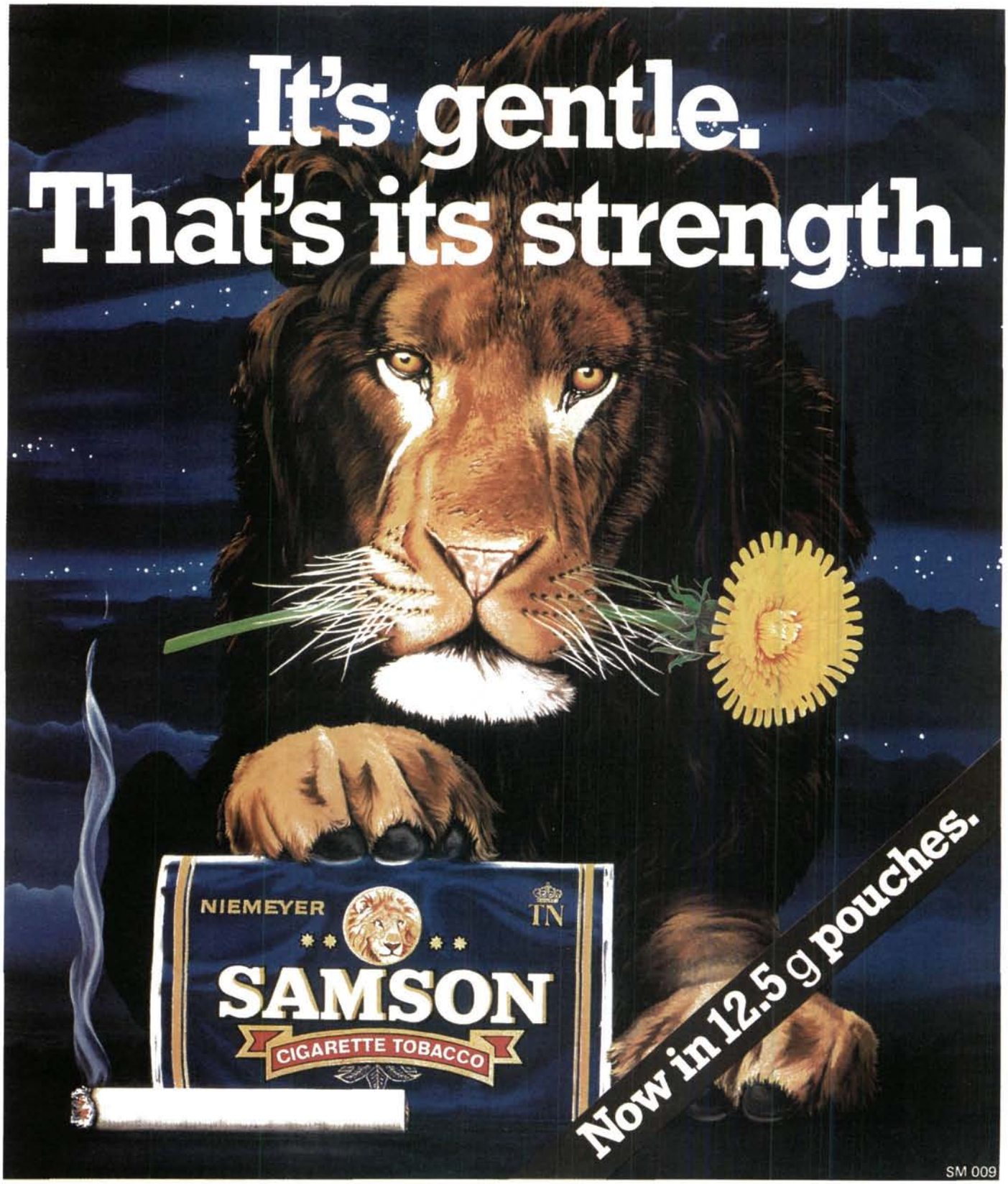

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NEW STATESMAN

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NEXT WEEK

What kind of security services do we deserve? The *NS* constructs a sane relationship between democratic government and secret agencies *Plus:* The hydrocarbon price — a portrait of Libya's Gadafy

The policy must change

THE LABOUR PARTY must change its defence policy. It has two compelling reasons for doing so: first, to make the process of arms reduction both more stable and more likely; and second, to assist the defeat of the Conservative government.

The polls appear to point up the urgency of the second reason. The latest — MORI on Tuesday — gives the government a two-point lead over Labour, a message which other recent polls have also carried. That, taken together with the continuing relatively poor showing for the Alliance, can be put down to the importance the defence issue commands in the minds of the public, and a view that the Alliance is incoherent and Labour is weak.

The Prime Minister and her advisers have seized on defence as the key to electoral victory. They can count on assistance — with the usual disclaimers that no meddling in internal affairs is intended — not just from the US, but from the other main members of NATO as well. There is not one major country in Western Europe whose government will support Labour's posture: and, since a social democratic victory at the West German polls next month is confidently ruled out, that is unlikely to change before *our* general election.

The electorate continue to insist that the nation's defence is the first duty of government. Radicalism in *this* area, therefore, is likely to be a particularly risky political choice, one to be made only when it is quite clear that the principle is wholly right and that the practice of achieving it is available. If the choice is made on these grounds, then political leaders could fairly say that a reasonable electorate could be and should be persuaded over time of the rightness of the cause, even at the cost of temporary unpopularity.

But here the first reason for Labour changing its stance comes into play. Labour, more than any other party, has made prominent the horror hidden within technical and political arguments over defence, and continued to insist that, while they exist, 'security' is a delusion. It has, like other West European socialist parties, highlighted the changes in the Soviet posture, and stressed the possibility of making deals. *But it cannot convince that unilateralism is the best way of achieving its ends because, on the available evidence, it is not.*

There are two main reasons for this, and they are paradoxical. The first is that Britain's nuclear force is, relatively, too small to matter. The cancellation of Trident, the phasing out of Polaris and the withdrawal of the US nuclear bases will leave vast arsenals of nuclear weapons on both sides and will not stabilise a tense and distrustful relationship. On the contrary, a unilateral withdrawal from the NATO nuclear strategy by the UK is more likely to lead to aggresive overcompensation by the US.

The second reason is that, politically, Britain is very important, *and could become more so with a government really determined to scale down the nuclear arsenals.* It carries greater persuasive force in the US than other West European governments. As a full member of the European Community, whose future membership is not in doubt, it has on its doorstep a forum for arguing a case no other present European government has the energy or idealism to put. Remaining within NATO's nuclear strategy does not have the satisfying finality of ending the possession of nuclear weaponry with the stroke of a pen: but to remain in with the intention of changing it will in the long run do much more.

Scaling down the arsenals can be done: Reykjavik gave us the the most tantalising glimpse of that. But there is not other available route than a bilateral one. The process, to be safe and to last, must be orderly: the two great alliances of NATO and the Warsaw Pact have to act coherently and with internal unity; and neither side can afford to send a signal, even from a part of itself, that fear of idealism can give the other a costless advantage. A reduction on one side has to be met by equal and verifiable reductions on the other.

That is why the reasoning put before the American people on Tuesday of this past week by Neil Kinnock will not convince either that audience or his domestic one, and why it must change. As he admitted in that speech, the component parts of Labour's argument — that Trident should be cancelled, that Polaris should be phased out, that the Poseidon submarine bases are likely to become obsolete, that cruise missiles are likely to be negotiated away — may command some assent in some quarters of the US, yet no-one appears able to 'accept the whole loaf'. But that is because the whole loaf is half baked.

Labour should and can remain the party most committed to the furtherance of world peace: it must proclaim itself so, and make that proclamation a central part of its politics and of its electoral campaign. But it must say, clearly, that it will further that principle best in association with other members of the Alliance, by persuading them to reduce the arsenals more rapidly than they otherwise might rather than by jolting them into it by precipitate example. That would be very hard for Kinnock to do, very hard for most of the Labour Party to swallow. But it would make more likely the defeat of this government, and that really *would* be a blow struck for peace. □

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ANC

Contras are coming

Contra leader Arturo Cruz will be in London this weekend (6-7 December) to put a gloss on the tarnished image of President Reagan's 'freedom fighters'. Cruz, the intellectual, 'acceptable face' of the Contras, is the guest of a coalition of right-wing youth groups.

Unlike many Contras who were formerly part of President Somoza's feared National Guard, Cruz opposed Somoza and was at one time Sandinista ambassador to the US. One of three leaders of the Contra umbrella group Unidad Nicaraguense Opsitora (UNO), Cruz is most often wheeled out to impress the foreign media.

The conference also stars former US Ambassador to the UN, Charles Lichtenstein, now senior fellow at the Heritage Foundation, powerhouse of the American right. Conference organiser Mark Gordon and 11 other bright young things from Britain, including David Hoile, founder of the recently disbanded Federation of Conservative Students' Committee for a Free Nicaragua (and conference adviser) recently flew to Washington for Heritage training in pro-Contra media-grabbing fundraising techniques at a cost of £10,000. Hoile and Gordon are off to play Rambo — on tour with the Contras — later this month.

The British jamboree, in the Barbican's Cinema Three, is being paid for by 'British businesses', says Gordon. 'Could you tell us who exactly put up the money?,' we asked. 'You must be joking'.

The Contras set up a Madrid office this year to improve their image in Europe and raise funds. Another Contra leader, Alfonso Robelo, told the Spanish daily *El País* in May that the Madrid operation was paid for by the CIA.

Jane Dibblin and Denis Campbell

Crossed wires

Liberal Party officials believe that crossed telephone lines have enabled them to listen to conversations between Conservative Party officials in Central Office and their callers. In one of these, claims the editor of *Liberal News*, Paul Sample, an unidentified member or official of the 'Sort out Sunday' Campaign — a pressure group which agitates for a change in the legislation to allow all shops to open on Sunday — offered to put £1.3m into Tory funds in marginal constituencies.

In the other call, overheard by Liberal Party assistant secretary Simon Bryson, Mr Jeffrey Archer, the former Tory Party deputy chairman who resigned last month, was discussing the sale of furry toys to assist party funds. At one point, says Bryson, Archer was asked 'How would they feel about the resignation?' — to which he replied that he thought it had blown over.

The much more serious question of payments from a pressure group to party funds was met earlier this week by a blanket denial from Lena Jeger, whose GJW lobbying company is handling the Sort Out Sunday campaign. Ms Jeger said that she would be 'astounded' if anyone in the campaign had attempted to use that kind of pressure on the Conservative Party. Earlier this year, the government failed in its attempt to legislate away the legal barriers to Sunday trading, and it is widely thought unlikely that it will bring the issue before Parliament again this term.

British Telecom's theory is that two wires have come close together, and a connection between them has been made by water. Neither Sample nor Bryson rule out dirty tricks, but tend to the view that they've held genuine calls. ●

Starving excellence

Goldsmiths' College in South East London is a rare centre of continuing education for adults, many of whom had given up on the educational system years before. Since the Goldsmiths' Company founded it in 1891 as the Technical and Recreative Institute, it has built up formidable strengths in the performing arts, fine arts, communications, social administration, social and youth work. It was transferred to London University in 1905, but its funding remained separate: today, it is one of the few institutions directly funded by the Department of Education and Science.

In this past year, it was agreed that Goldsmiths' would receive its funding direct from the University. The DES let it be known that it would meet the transitional cost of £1.2m, for staffing changes and pension payments. But last month, George Walden, the minister for higher education, told Goldsmiths' officials at private meetings that the money would not be available.

The government's decision comes, ironically, at a time when the DES has appeared to recognise the value of continuing education: only last month, the University Grants Committee allocated a further £3m to it. The DES negotiations with Goldsmiths' continue.

Ivor Gaber

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PETER KELLNER

Roll up, roll up for the Oxbridge circus's Moscow matinee

ALL WE NEED is for Mrs Thatcher (Somerville College, Oxford) to say that she was on holiday at the time, just as she did when Sir Keith Joseph (Magdalen College, Oxford) decided to introduce loans for students. She could have been 'on holiday' at any of a number of times — when Sir Michael Havers (Corpus Christi College, Cambridge) was by-passed in the decision not to try to block publication of Chapman Pincher's book, *Their trade is Treachery*; or when it was decided to apply to the Australian courts to prevent publication of Peter Wright's memoirs; or when Sir Robert Armstrong (Christ Church, Oxford) was chosen as the government's chief witness in the Australian court case.

As things stand, it is hard to conclude whether we should be shocked by what has emerged about the behaviour in the past 30 years of MI5 and in the past 30 days of Sir Robert — or, alternatively, amused by the spectacle of so seedy a government in such disarray. For many of us the answer is both: we shout 'scandal', but seem unable to wipe completely the smirk off our faces.

A number of immediate points remain unresolved as the *NS* goes to press: who precisely decided, and how, that Pincher's book should not be stopped? How did the government obtain advance copies of his book? How did Sir Robert come to tell such whoppers in court — was he really ignorant of Sir Michael Havers's role, or did he hope to get away with lying? What is in the government papers handed over to the judge? Is Neil Kinnock's phone being tapped?

Such questions are beginning to overshadow the original issues: was Sir Roger Hollis (Worcester College, Oxford) really a Soviet spy? Did MI5 spy on Harold Wilson? And what other dirty tricks have yet to be disclosed?

All these matters are important. In particular, if it turns out that Kinnock's phone has been tapped, the row that ensues will surely dwarf all that has gone before. If political accountability is to mean anything, it is hard to see the government surviving. At the very least either Sir Geoffrey Howe (Trinity Hall, Cambridge) or Douglas Hurd (Trinity College, Cambridge) would have to go.

FOR THE MOMENT such reveries remain distinctly implausible. It is not unknown for politicians or their aides to make unguarded comments, which are then picked up and exploited by their opponents. My betting is that someone from either Malcolm Turnbull's office or Kinnock's inadvertently let it slip, 'just between you and me', that the two men had talked. It would be no great crime if this was the match that lit this particular bush fire — especially as nobody has seriously disputed Kinnock's claim that he was simply checking the public record before speaking in the Commons.

Let us assume that the Kinnock phone-tap episode proves to be short-lived and inconclusive. The other specific issues will doubtless amble to some sort of conclusion, even if not everybody agrees precisely what those conclusions are. (It is theoretically possible to prove that Sir Roger Hollis was a spy; it is not theoretically possible to prove that he was *not* a spy, any more than it could be proved beyond doubt that the Queen Mother or, for that matter, Sir Robert Armstrong never worked for the Soviet Union. The Queen Mum did know Anthony Blunt (Trinity College, Cambridge) after all — and as for Sir Robert, could the KGB have written a more self-serving script if they were coaching him in the art of undermining public faith in the British government machine?)

But when the dust finally settles, if it ever does, some fairly mammoth, if less dramatic, matters will still need to be sorted out. The hardest will be to crack open the closed world of Britain's political and administrative elite. It is no coincidence that almost all the major combatants in almost all the post-war spy scandals have come from Oxbridge. Nor is it a coincidence that so many spies remained undetected for so long.

> ***Here is a genuine important, democratic and anti-elitist campaign that Labour should already have started***

In his column in this Tuesday's *Independent*, Sir William Rees-Mogg (Balliol College, Oxford) sniffs the glue that keeps the culture of Oxbridge together, and allows bizarre observations about the qualities of 'good chaps' to come before serious evidence about loyalty and judgement:

> I very much doubt Mr Wright's view that Hollis was a spy. I do not believe he was an ideological man at all, much more an old-fashioned, patriotic, upper middle-class Englishman.

What, one might ask, is the basis of Sir William's conclusion? He admits 'I never met Roger Hollis'. The answer, it seems, is that he did know Hollis's brother, Christopher, 'the Catholic MP', well. Rees-Mogg might have added that Christopher was also a graduate of Balliol if he wished to establish the family's patriotic credentials. Instead he relies on what one might generously regard as hearsay evidence of Roger Hollis's character: 'I remember my father remarking that he had met Roger at some function in Wells'. So that's all right then — if the encounter had been in Ebbw Vale, the verdict might have been different.

Seriously, though, Rees-Mogg's is the authentic voice of the Oxbridge establishment. In various capricious ways, the elite reproduces itself, trying to make sure that each new entrant is 'one of us'. Nor is this simply a left-wing observation. As Andrew Roth reported in the *NS* last week, the former right-wing Tory MP, Henry Kerby, served with MI6. As Rees-Mogg might have put it, I never met Capt. Kerby. But some years ago, when Joe Haines named him as someone who had secretly helped Harold Wilson, I explored his record.

Lord Wigg, who had been Wilson's security adviser, confirmed the Kerby story to me and gave me documentary evidence of Kerby's activities. The point is that Kerby observed the Oxbridge elite from outside: he had gone straight from school to the army. He loathed the 'unfrocked dons, misfits, oddities, queers and drunks' who had joined the security services — and they were overwhelmingly Oxbridge graduates who had been deemed suitable by their Oxbridge elders. Kerby supplied Wilson with material not because he had any sympathy with Labour's policies but because he trusted Wilson's patriotism far more than he trusted that of the security services and many inside the Conservative Party.

THE DOMINATION of Oxbridge in Whitehall in general and the Foreign Office in particular still goes on. Anyone who wishes to watch it in germination should view BBC2's *Forty Minutes* programme on civil service selection. The first, this Thursday, shows 'Cizbee' — the Civil Service Selection Board — short-listing candidates for entry into Whitehall's fast stream. Next Thursday's programme shows the two who survived Cizbee being interviewd by the Final Selection Board, which decides who is invited to embark on a career that could lead to one of the highest jobs in Britain's government machine 30 years from now.

The programmes are revealing, not least because it is the first time that cameras have been allowed into Cizbee or the FSB. The words and expressions convey more than statistics ever can about the way Oxbridge still dominates fast-stream recruitment. And, for those with memories of the Ponting case, it is a minor pleasure to watch Ponting's head of personnel in action. Richard Hastie-Smith (Magdalene College, Cambridge) was one of the people caught up in the tangled circumstances that led to Ponting's prosecution. In next week's *Forty Minutes* he is seen helping to pick future high-flyers. Of the two people seen to reach the FSB, one comes from Oxford and the other from . . . you've guessed.

A number of important structural changes need to be made in the way Britain's security services operate. They need to be held more accountable to ministers and to some form of parliamentary scrutiny. Some means must be found to ascertain whether they give value for money or whether — as the French Prime Minister Jacques Chirac incautiously told the American journalist Arnaud de Borchgrave recently — security services in general are useless.

But, more fundamentally, Whitehall's village needs to be shaken out and opened up. Sir Robert Armstrong should retire as village elder and give way to someone willing to take on the task. Here is a genuine, important, democratic and anti-elitist campaign that Labour should already have started. Why it hasn't is beyond me (King's College, Cambridge).

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USA

No mistake: this *is* Reagan's foreign policy

We're delighted that we have tempted back* CHRISTOPHER HITCHENS *from our rival,* The Spectator, *as our regular US columnist. Hitchens is among the most incisive and elegant dissectors of US politics now writing. He joins us at a critical time for the Reagan presidency. In the first of his bi-weekly columns, Hitchens reports that below the tumult of 'Irangate' we are witnessing true Reaganism abroad

Washington

IN THE MOVIE version of Richard Condon's *The Manchurian Candidate*, the poor sap who plays the Joe McCarthy figure gets all confused. One day he has to say there are 50 communists in the State Department, and next day his handlers order him to name 75. He fears that he may attract ridicule. 'You dummy,' says his ambitious wife, at breakfast, 'don't you realise? People aren't asking whether there are communists in the State Department any more. They're asking *how many* communists there are.' At this point, the husband's glassy eye falls on a bottle of Heinz ketchup. Cut to the next scene, where he solemnly announces that there are 57 enemies of the state holed up at Foggy Bottom.

This sort of manic guesswork is all right if you want to conduct a witch-hunt. And an improvised version of it has seen the President himself through six years in the White House. But it's no use if you want to make sense of a fast-breaking story. Don't ask how many of the high command were in on the secret. Don't get too enthralled about how many cargo planes landed in Tehran, or how many millions of dollars changed hands. All that can be left to the innumerable investigating committees. Ask instead — what is Ronald Reagan's foreign policy?

Most Presidents like to have a 'doctrine' and there were no complaints from the White House when 'the Reagan Doctrine' was enunciated by various tame columnists and publicists a few years ago. The chief ingredients of the doctrine can be, for convenience, numbered and placed in body bags:

1. Anti-communist subversion would no longer be distinguished from anti-Soviet resistance. Any group or movement, anywhere, that fought against the evil empire in any way, would be given military assistance. This would be open where it was admissible, and secret where it was not. Crucially, though, there were to be no discriminations. The recipients of aid did not have to be in any sense the wave of the future. (If they were like Solidarity in Poland, they got only rhetorical backing.)
2. Alliances with existing governments would be judged in the light of this test. The 'human rights' litmus, which at least in theory was employed by Carter and even by Ford and Nixon, was abandoned altogether. It would be no criticism, for example, to say of a movement like UNITA in Angola that, whatever its other merits, it was a client of South Africa. The same was to apply to the Khmer Rouge and China, the Afghan guerrillas and General Zia and (until 1982) the Nicaraguan Contras and the abattoir regime of General Galtieri in Argentina.
3. The opinion of the press, of public opinion and of Congress had to be changed. They had to be weaned from what Norman Podhoretz, the leading neo-Reaganite essayist, called 'sickly inhibitions about the use of force'. This meant keeping the press out of Grenada, making a brilliant series of affirmative speeches about 'standing tall', and cowing House and Senate with the popularity of the new, guilt-free, Americanism. Here, Reagan's symbolic politics of macho success and national renewal meshed perfectly with his objective need for a free hand overseas. It was understood in Washington that the unelected National Security Council would not be pestered by a clutch of whining bleeding-hearts.
4. Terrorism was to become the keyword. Not everyone feels immediately threatened by the Red Army, but every citizen gets on an aeroplane one day. There is every reason to think that the choice of 'terrorism' as the psychological theme was very carefully worked out. (After all, it has 57 varieties.)
5. Since there would have to be dirty work, there would have to be surrogates. The chosen surrogate was the state of Israel, which

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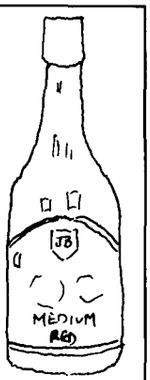

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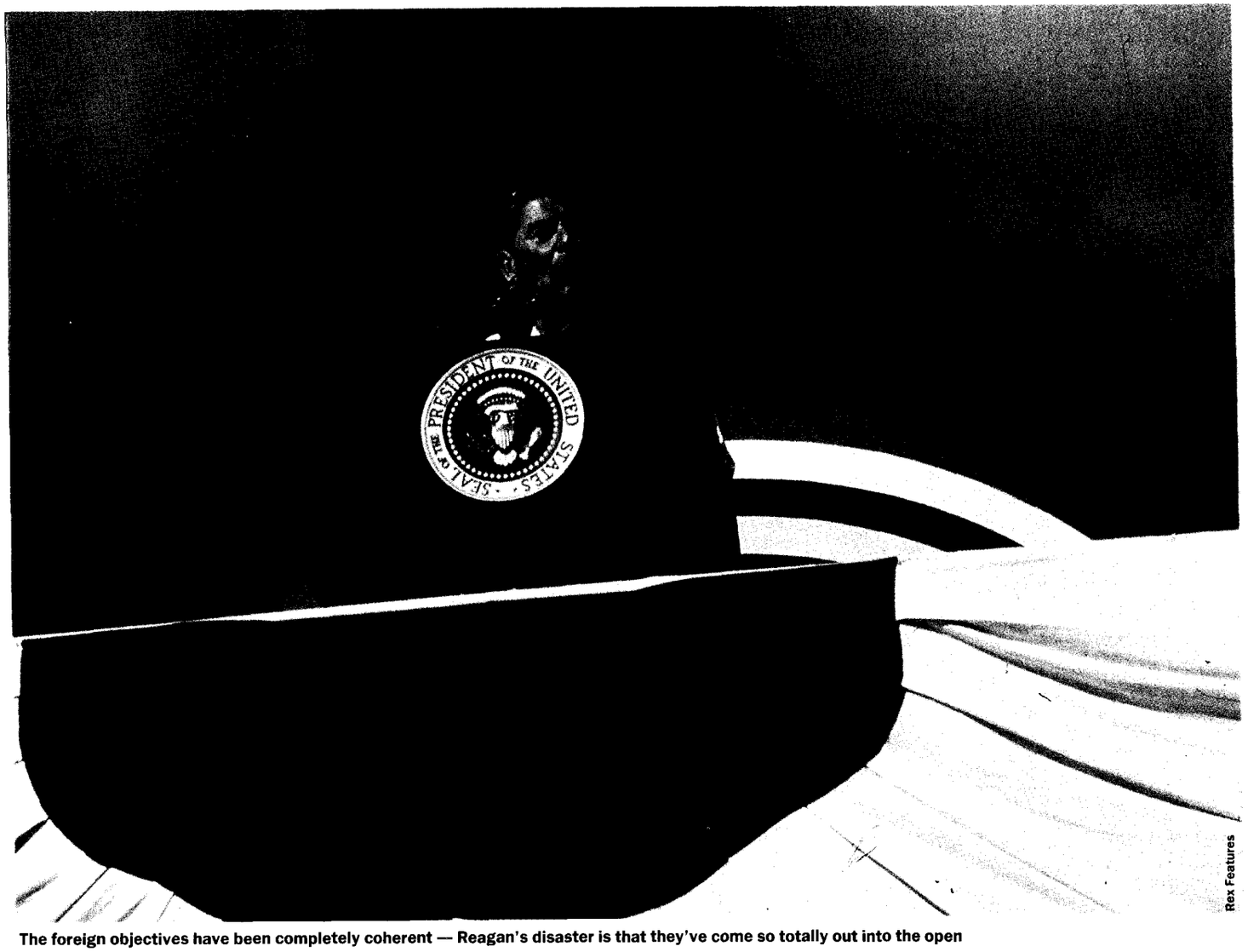

The foreign objectives have been completely coherent — Reagan's disaster is that they've come so totally out into the open

pioneered 'terrorism' as a keyword and which has an immense store of military and intelligence expertise as well as some debts to pay.

LOOK AT THE Iran-Nicaragua collusion and what do you find? You find arms and money going to extremist forces in Central America and the Middle East (in the latter case even despite their hostility to the United States and Israel) for no better reason than their anti-communism. You find that not only Congress but the State Department are excluded from any real knowledge of the deal. You find that Israel is the surrogate in both cases.

It might all have worked except for point (4) above. The White House overdid terrorism as a subject, and made Iran into a demon as a result. It could have survived (has survived) the revelation of being in bed with South Africa, Chile and Saudi Arabia. But to be caught in the sack with Iran was to violate its own propaganda, dismay its own staff and appall its most trusting supporters. It will be a cold day in hell before we get another in the rousing series of 'united front against terror' speeches from the Oval Office.

Look at it in this way, and you see the triviality of this week's 'urgent questions'. If Ronald Reagan says that he didn't know about the blood-money bank in the White House basement, he is saying that he didn't know about his own foreign policy. What has been exposed to view is the Reagan Doctrine in its purest form. He'll be hard put to disown that.

This explains the livid fury of the Reaganite true believers this week. For them, Colonel Oliver North is a hero on the scale of General Douglas MacArthur, and George Shultz a traitor on a par with Alger Hiss. (I do not exaggerate the way they talk.) Here they had a policy which achieved the impossible — an alliance between Israel, Iran and Saudi Arabia, directed at the Soviet Union and keeping the price of oil within American reach. Not only did this collusion give promise of solving the hostage crisis, but it was even paying for the counter-revolution in Nicaragua while the lily-livered Congress made up its mind. Not bad for the allegedly incompetent Reaganites. In fact, if put in that way to the public, it might have won considerable support. But that is just what the President lacked the nerve to do. By saying that he didn't know about the collusion, he has doomed himself as a liar and trickster and thrown away the stock of credit that he had built up with that decisive group of voters who, quite deliberately, don't want to know.

SO, FORGET ALL the talk about 'aberrations' and 'embarrassing disclosures'. The essence of the operation, like its secrecy, was its absolute consistency with announced White House goals and methods. The authentic right concede this with their howls at George Shultz for his 'disloyalty'. The only truly 'embarrassed' people are the ex-liberals and ex-Democrats who have formed such a large part of the Reagan smokescreen through one and a half administrations. The policy of covert support for the Nicaraguan Contras, in particular, was their policy. So was the idea of giving a clear run to the Israeli right. Now Jeane Kirkpatrick, Elliot Abrams, Norman Podhoretz and the rest are bleating that they knew nothing, and that the policy should survive its shabby implementation. Are they really saying, as they seem to be, that they willed the end and not the means? Or are they saying, as the President seems to be, that they mandated the policy and didn't want to know the details? Either way, it is a cruel judgement on those who abandoned the Democratic Party because of its unfitness to conduct American foreign policy.

A few days ago, the United States violated the arms control policy of the last three Presidents by deploying another B-52 bomber with cruise missile capacity and busting SALT II. The 'moderates' were shocked again. What difference would it have made if the B-52 had been accidentally painted in Iranian colours? The point is that Reagan's people mean what they say. □

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Who gets the platform?

Campus activists are convulsed by the question of who is allowed to use their platforms.* FRANCIS BECKETT *reports below: on p10,* PAUL HIRST *argues that universities face a crisis of public acceptability

LONDON SCHOOL of Economics, 30 October 1986. Students voted narrowly in favour of hearing a guest speaker. Those opposed to it pelted her with paper aeroplanes and shouted as she spoke.

Despite LSE's strategic position at the end of Fleet Street, newspapers didn't cover it, though they have sent reporters to the north of England for similar events. But this time the speaker was Vicky Phillips, president of the National Union of Students (NUS), and those who didn't want to hear her were from the Federation of Conservative Students (FCS), which denounces NUS's 'no platform for racists' policy as a denial of free speech. The FCS will try to give Ms Phillips a hard time on the issue this weekend at the NUS conference — though the issue will not be formally debated.

History is repeating itself (*see box*). This year and last, a pride of top Tories have been given a hard time on Britain's campuses: Sir Keith Joseph, Leon Brittan, David Waddington, Michael Heseltine, Michael Fallon and others. So has Enoch Powell, who, like some of the Tories, was accused of racism. Others, like Sir Keith Joseph, were simply unpopular, and were treated the way unpopular politicians have been treated for centuries. Sir Keith, who, unpolitician-like, hates crowds anyway, calls it 'barbarism' and wants his colleagues to tell him when it happens to them.

Neither he nor anyone else has experienced as much 'barbarism' as John Carlisle, the Conservative MP whose views on South Africa have earned him the title 'The Honourable Member for Pretoria.' This year alone Carlisle has been stopped from speaking at Oxford and East Anglia universities; pushed at Bradford; jostled at Hull; and twice had his invitation withdrawn at York.

But things aren't always what they seem. At East Anglia the student union wanted to let Carlisle speak, and simply ran a silent vigil in the car park outside, hearing speakers from Anti-Apartheid and the ANC. 1,000 students went to the car park. But the Socialist Workers Party had different ideas. Thirty of them barred the front entrance. Even so, he could have got through — they didn't recognise him, and he had to tell them who he was. Student union officials offered to take him through another entrance, but for Carlisle it was the front door or nothing, and the press release about the howling mob who stopped him from speaking was issued minutes after his angry departure.

NUS leaders say they're being set up. The Federation of Conservative Students wants student unions to pull out of the NUS. The government wants to curb student unions, and its Education Act, which makes college authorities responsible for policing student meetings, has had an easier passage because of the publicity about 'free speech'. The NUS policy, after all the fuss, seems almost tame. It says student unions should not provide a platform, or union facilities, for 'groups such as WISE ['Welsh, Irish, Scots, English', a white Britain only group], Tory Action . . . the National Front, the British Movement and the League of St George [a right-wing splinter group].'

The NUS policy adds: 'The abuse of this policy against those who are not declared racists or fascists brings the whole policy into disrepute.' And NUS does its best to limit abuses. Last week South Bank Polytechnic followed Sunderland Polytechnic, and backed down in the face of Ms Phillip's threat to suspend them from NUS if they pursued their policy of declaring Jewish societies racist and denying them funds and facilities. She may yet find the School of Oriental and African Studies stands firm against her, but NUS has acted decisively and effectively enough to spike FCS charges of being soft on anti-semitism.

Talking to her, and seeing the political skill with which she handles the problem, it's easy to feel that, with intelligent politicians running NUS (and they do: getting to the top in NUS requires real political skill) there's not a lot to worry about.

But the phrase 'groups such as' delegates the debate to the campuses, and leaves the crucial definition of 'racist' to small student groups. There, it is conducted with the slightly comical feverishness which has always characterised student politics (and I hope always will). Hence the odd verbal constructions which use 'no platform' as a verb ('the best way to no platform someone') and a noun ('so the left slapped a no platform on him').

NOWHERE IS THERE more feverishness than at Bristol University, where, after several heated debates, students still refuse to adopt NUS's 'no platform' policy. They see it as a threat to free speech, along with Oxford, Cambridge and (in a recent change of heart) York universities.

If speakers are stopped, it's unofficial. In the 1,000-strong audience facing Enoch Powell on 23 October, a few — not more than a dozen — from the front row got on the stage and stopped him. The two teachers at the centre of racism storms, Ray Honeyford and Jonathan Savery, addressed a crowded meeting efficiently stewarded by students. Harvey Proctor was stopped: John Carlisle, unusually, wasn't. (He spoke about 'free speech', naturally.) But it's Professor John Vincent who guarantees that Bristol will not stop talking about 'no platform'. As well as teaching modern history, Vincent writes a column in the *Sun*, and late last year a student newspaper quoted

South West News

Professor John Vincent (far right) leaves Bristol University during one of the scenes of uproar

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from it to back up a claim of 'racism and sexism':

> 'If Neil Kinnock seems a weak husband overshadowed by a stronger-willed wife, many will sympathise. But few will respect him the more for it.'
> '. . . a Sikh claimed the right to sit down while giving his evidence. This was because he had no respect for this country, its civilisation or its courts.'
> 'The passport factories of Bangladesh have been working overtime.'

It was that kind of thing which roused the anger of the left. When the *Sun* moved to Wapping, a student union meeting decided to picket one of Professor Vincent's lectures for three weeks in March. They demanded the university's name come off the *Sun* column, and that Vincent be fired. The intention was simply to give leaflets outside the lecture, and suggest a boycott to Vincent's students. Quite what went wrong, it's hard to say. 200 people demonstrated, a door was smashed, Vincent retreated to his car and left. University staff claim that the demonstration turned ugly. Demonstrators claim that the nervous, clumsy over-reaction by the authorities caused what trouble there was. The *Sun* was in no doubt: the front page headline was LEFTIE THUGS ATTACK SUN PROF. The university authorities disciplined 18 students, but they successfully appealed against the decision.

Soon afterwards, the *Sun* quietly stopped billing Vincent as a Bristol University professor. So perhaps the demonstrators did the university a favour. A serious academic institution, concerned about its reputation, can't afford to have its modern history professor sounding like Alf Garnett in public every morning. 'There would have been other ways of getting the University's name off the article' believes Michael Banton, Bristol's sociology professor and pro vice chancellor, and author of several books on race relations. 'John Vincent was attacked for things he said, not at the university, but in his private capacity. It was disgraceful.' But *was* it private — while his post gave lustre to the column?

Banton argues that the NUS's 'no platform' policy will not help race relations: 'Racism should be attached to statements, not to people. When you call someone a racist, you put that person on the defensive. But say he's said something racist, and you stand a chance of persuading him.' He complains that 'radicals too easily equate opposition to immigration with racism,' and considers it must always be wrong in principle to ban someone from speaking when you don't know what they will say: 'The fact that a person has said racist things does not mean the same person will say something racist again.' 'Free speech within the law' is Banton's call, even for the National Front, of whom he observes 'they have made no impact.' So would he ban them the moment they appeared to be making any impact? He paused and thought. All he would say in the end was: 'The sorts of things that happened in Germany must be prevented by all possible means. But we are not in that situation.'

BRISTOL'S Conservative Association is strong, and growing, partly because of its effective campaign against 'no platform'. Its president, Philip Malcolm , is one of the FCS's stars: a highly intelligent and likeable law student who describes himself as Thatcherite and will probably be elected as one of Bristol's delegation to the NUS's December conference on personal popularity alone, rather than on his one-issue platform. The issue, naturally, is opposition to 'no platform.' Malcolm argues for 'free speech' for the NF on the grounds that 'if the National Front went to Bristol and were exposed, people could see real racists.'

'They didn't like my views'

PROFESSOR John Vincent of Bristol University is the country's best known academic: his *Sun* column reaches that newspaper's 6-7m readers every Wednesday. It's punchy, right-wing stuff, light years from academic prose: Bristol students, led, says Vincent, by the Socialist Workers' Party and 'anarchists', managed to get a vote calling for his dismissal through the students union by 111 votes to 86 in Februaty 'because they didn't like my views': he was accused of heterosexism and racism, of being anti-working class, anti the North and anti-gay.

Interviewed earlier this week, Vincent claims a pluralist view of race. 'I'm strongly in favour of separate schooling — of separate Koranic schools, for example. You have to integrate people at the levels of skills and language, but there's no reason to insist on common schooling. The best position is where you get a lot of people functioning efficiently in English society, but not required to give up their religious or cultural identity. The Jewish community is the perfect example of that.

'The stage of primary integration is obviously over. It's gone quite well, really: that should be more stressed. There will be a politicised leadership of ethnic groups; we have to accept that. It's just a question of working out which of their goals we should accept and which we shouldn't.'

On students

'I think the libertarian forces won out. Here in Bristol, the vote against me was inquorate, and the 111 votes represented the limits of the hard left's constituency. They used to give me leaflets in the street, asking me to demonstrate against myself.

'I think it's sad: sad that at the age of 20, when life is rather interesting, that people should be devoted to going through back issues of the *Sun* trying to get a professor sacked.

'It was very inward looking — like a public school rag. There was some research which showed that half of those involved came from public schools. That wouldn't have happened if they'd come from comprehensives. It just wouldn't have happened.

'The campaign was picked up from the printers at Wapping. They shouted "Murdoch out" and "Kill kill".

'The universities are just not equipped to deal with 100 or so people determined to bust things up. We can't be prepared for that.' ●

'All this rubbish about free speech'

THE EASTER 1974 conference of the National Union of Students decided on a policy of 'no platform for racists and fascists' and brought down on its head such a storm that today's attacks by press and politicians seem tame. Perhaps the intervening 12 years have at least taught Fleet Street that free speech isn't as simple an issue as they once thought.

Though today's student politicians were small children at the time, the phraseology, the arguments, the sequence of events are eerily similar. Then as now, Bristol University was in the eye of the storm, having started the ball rolling by banning Monday Clubber Patrick Wall. Then as now the NUS struggled with the problem of defining 'racism', saying that if the policy was misused it would be discredited. Hours were spent on debating whether the likes of Professor Hans Eysenck were racists for propagating the view that genetics and racial heredity were important in determining intelligence. President John Randall, a student of biology and now deputy general secretary of the Civil Service Union, said no; secretary Steve Parry said yes.

Then as now, the mournful, infrangible figure of Sir Keith Joseph was abused, shouted at, and disgusted. He made an appearance in the gallery at the following year's NUS conference. The new president, Charles Clarke (now an adviser to Neil Kinnock) drew conference's attention to him, and Sir Keith beat a hasty retreat in front of chanting students. I (then NUS press officer) piled into his taxi, together with PA education correspondent John Scott, and Sir Keith denounced the left wing NUS leadership until I mentioned that its executive members had escorted him safely out. He turned on me those cold, uncomprehending eyes. 'Am I to understand that I owe my deliverance to the Communist Party?' he asked. Then as now, Sir Keith and his colleagues wanted to curb the NUS and student unions; but they were out of government, and their last Education Secretary, Margaret Thatcher, had been unable to persuade her colleagues to proceed with her student union legislation.

The difference was in the sheer number of words and headlines. Even the *Guardian*, normally one of the NUS's friends, joined in the condemnation. An organisation called Free Speech in NUS emerged, led by the student president at City University, Brendan Barber, now Director of Public Relations for the TUC. Barber got enough signatures to get a special conference called to consider reversing the Easter 1974 decision. Half way through the debate at the special conference, a student with blood on his face came to the rostrum to say that while they were talking 'all this rubbish about free speech,' students were being 'attacked by police' while on an anti-fascist demonstration in nearby Red Lion Square. Later it was learned that Warwick University student Kevin Gately had died after clashes with police.

Amid the furore over Red Lion Square it went relatively unnoticed that the special conference — against all predictions — refused to change the policy. Looking back, Steve Parry, then very much the man in the eye of the storm and one of the most vilified figures in the country, says: 'It was one of the few occasions when the NUS acted as a catalyst. Then, the media and even sections of the left were against local authorities refusing their facilities to racist meetings. Now, in many local authorities, that's taken for granted. Progress in the fight against racism would have been even slower without what we did then.' ●

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The charge of racism against the likes of John Carlisle he believes is 'absurd'.

He's perfectly open about the mileage to be made from opposition to the 'no platform' policy: 'NUS is a waste of time. I'm only going to the conference to get propaganda for the future. The NUS only starts to matter when it starts putting up dangerous policies like this one.' He quotes John Stuart Mill: 'If the whole world were of one opinion, and one man were of a contrary opinion, the world would have no more right to stifle that one man than he would have the right, if he had the power, to stifle the world.'

Bristol student union president David Gottlieb thinks there is far less difference between the NUS and its critics than either side will admit: local Conservative MP Michael Stern demands freedom of speech within the law — but has told Gottlieb that he does not see how the National Front *could* speak without breaking the law. The NUS view is that with 'no platform' it is only going a fraction further than the law: 'It has long been recognised' says its briefing for student unions 'that the Race Relations Act has not been enforced adequately and that the protection given to ethnic minorities (is) negligible.'

Not unreasonably, the NUS finds it hard to give precise definitions — this sort of person is a racist, *this* sort isn't. Like Stephanie Harrison at Bristol, one of the organisers of the Vincent demonstrations and an advocate of the 'no platform' policy, NUS leaders like to be a little ad hoc about it, and discuss each case as it comes up. Harrison points out, for example, that John Carlisle is a travelling apologist for South Africa, advocating sporting links, denouncing sanctions, saying 'one man one vote' is many generations off, going to South Africa as a guest of its government — 'surely that's racism?' She offers the NUS procedure as part of a guarantee against abuse: no-one to be classified as a racist and denied a platform unless a student union meeting has democratically taken the decision.

All the right-wing claptrap about freedom of speech and academic freedom has hidden the real problem with 'no platform.' *Because no one wants to be thought a racist, the word can be a potent weapon in unscrupulous hands.* And though all the student politicians I met, without exception, were careful and committed, there are plenty of unscrupulous hands around. It may be that Brent head teacher Maureen McGoldrick fell foul of some of them. Just in the last few months, I have listened to the word 'racist' being used for Labour Party opponents of black sections; for Roy Hattersley; for a media studies lecturer who refused to interrupt a lecture to discuss politics with a black student; for an economic lecturer who failed an Asian student.

Racism is one of the great evils of our time. When we take action on it, we must know exactly what it is. □

Crisis of confidence

BRITISH UNIVERSITIES are under assault. Since 1981 the Department of Education and Science has acted relentlessly both to reduce their funding and by using this financial lever to restrict their autonomy. This *dirigisme* is continuing even as the purse strings are loosened slightly in the run-up to the election; universities are being forced to accept central direction as the price for a level of emergency funding barely sufficient to stave off bankruptcy. The University Grants Commission and the Committee of Vice Chancellors and Principals have become willing accomplices in the imposition of business-style management structures and accepting the principle of student loans. The autonomy of universities is thus threatened both in financial and policy terms and as institutions where both scholarship and public debate can be freely and rationally conducted.

British universities do not enjoy the public esteem and widespread political support necessary if they are to perform their traditional role. On the right they are perceived as privileged ivory towers where idle and incompetent lectures teach economically irrelevant subjects in a context of values hostile to a business culture and where politicised students supported by the state seek to silence those teachers and outsiders whose opinions they disapprove of. On the extreme left they are perceived as privileged oases of elitism, snobbery and reaction that cling to obsolete liberal values which allow scabs and union bashers, racists and apologists for South Africa to speak with impunity.

University teachers and administrators need to recognise that they must answer the challenges thrown at them in *political* terms and not with a bland mask of academic neutrality. The universities' political status is now in question because their constitutional and financial autonomy is no longer taken for granted.

I offer a personal answer under three heads.

First, universities must challenge the powerful tendencies toward centralism in financial control and policy making that have been accelerated by but were not initiated by the present Conservative government. Westminster and Whitehall cannot run everything; they cannot appropriate all initiative, and yet expect a knowledgeable, responsive and responsible system of administration at lower levels. Defence of the autonomy of academic policy making should not be presented as securing an exclusive privilege for universities, but as part and parcel of a broader vision of a decentralised, democratised and pluralistic society.

Second, accountability is of little use if it moves in one direction only, upwards. Universities must be accountable, but in an active and democratic culture of public debate. Britain needs vocationally trained personnel and industrially relevant research, but it also needs a political and administrative culture in which issues are debated on the basis of knowledge. Society needs research and knowledge but also competent citizens and administrators. The key support for such competence is a good liberal higher education and one as widely diffused as possible. Narrowly vocational and 'relevant' courses, a restrictive entry and tightly-controlled teachers whose work is subject to political pressure, are not merely a recipe for an illiberal education, they are a threat to a liberal society.

THIRD, students and teachers must take the values of such an educational and public role seriously. Commitment to knowledge and to public discussion based upon it require them to accept both a plurality of views and the need for reasoned debate.

Outright racists and fascists would pose a direct threat to such values should they enjoy power — systematic racial or political discrimination *is* incompatible with a liberal democratic order. But many of those who propose a 'no platform' policy are *also* no friends of such values. The problem of freedom to teach and to debate in higher education is ultimately a political one and no easy boundary can be drawn between 'acceptable' views and threats to the liberal democratic order. Universities cannot evade the need, in certain circumstances, to censure teachers or students for what they have said and done, nor the need to prevent outside speakers speaking.

In the end, the governing bodies in higher education must decide the limits. Students and teachers should be, and generally are, adequately represented on such bodies. Universities should be under a public obligation to ensure freedom to teach and debate, but that obligation should be entrusted to them to police. In doing so they should take the most libertarian line consistent with their role. Obviously they should not ban meetings where speakers simply say unpopular things nor should they connive in the silencing of teachers who say unpopular things.

On the whole, both higher education and the left in the wider society will be the main losers if the political opinions of the ruling powers or the majority dictate what is and is not acceptable to say in a lecture or a political meeting at a college. The price of an openness in intellectual debate that is not merely consensual is a considerable measure of freedom for both the hard left *and* the hard right, if they stay within the law. Pretending we live in a left-wing consensual system may be possible for members of certain student unions or academics in certain departments, but it is a pretence and a foolish one. Higher education will only be allowed a liberal autonomy if it uses its independence liberally.

Much of the hostility to universities and higher education generally is based upon ill-informed prejudice. Universities, however, cannot assume that they will again enjoy the cozy patronage of the great and the good. Senior policy makers in universities have bent to the will of government because so many university teachers have been passive and have not cared enough about the wider aspects of their own role. Resistance has been conservative, inward looking and selfish. Only if the universities and higher education generally take their wider social tasks seriously can they hope to convince the public to give them both the money and the freedom to do their job properly.

Part of that enterprise of convincing outsiders of their worth is to ensure that norms of free discussion and open debate are imposed and enforced. □

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Model for socialism

THE BATTLE for the soul of the GLC has begun. The symbolic issue over which the hard and soft lefts have divided is whether the Greater London Enterprise Board (GLEB) was a success or not.

In its three brief years of fully-funded intervention in the London economy, GLEB pumped over £60 million into projects designed to create or save jobs, and encourage co-ops and equal opportunity businesses. Now GLEB has been taken over by 12 Labour boroughs and cut down to a budget of £1 million a year, all but one of the management team have left and, strictly off the record, a slanging match has broken out.

In *London Labour Briefing*, hard left purveyor of quotes for Tory ministers, an anonymous article appeared in October called 'Purge at GLEB'. It alleged a right-wing takeover by people prepared to justify job losses to reassure 'conservative financial institutions' and Roy Hattersley who were 'downgrading the wider socialist strategic and social objectives which GLEB was given when it was launched'.

At the heart of the row is what happened to that £60 million: there seems very little to show for it. A little of it went to corrupt property developers and GLEB officials who saw the GLC bonanza as a soft touch. Most of it was honestly, but according to the new management not wisely, spent.

Last week London's Labour councils backed the new brooms. The Association of London Authorities accepted a paper by GLEB's new chair, ex-Hackney leader Tony Millwood, which says that GLEB in the past failed to distinguish between investments and grants.

> As a result of this (and other failings) GLEB has now a very weak investment portfolio, and very considerable sums of money have been spent neither in supporting investment objectives nor in promoting social objectives, but in funding the ongoing revenue losses of companies for which there was little or no reasonable chance of eventual success and profitability. The great bulk of money passed to GLEB by the GLC has been lost in this way.

The departed managers, dubbed the 'visionaries', are furious with the suggestion that money was wasted. For them GLEB was an exemplary project, 'prefiguring' a socialist industrial policy for use by a national Labour government. The 'cost per job' saved or created was around £3,700 a year, they claim, presenting a direct challenge to the government's economic logic in paying £6,000 a year in benefits and lost taxes for each unemployed worker.

New joint chief executives of GLEB Mary Rogers and Richard Minns have disposed of much of the property portfolio and pulled the plug on several investments. In this they had no choice, as GLEB's new sponsors are all ratecapped and squeezed financially. *Briefing* alleged they are paid £47,000 a year: in fact it's £32,500, and their critics also walked away with substantial redundancy payments. But it's the policy change that has upset the visionaries: separating the accounting for commercial return and for social objectives; trying to attract private sector money (including council pension funds); and working with the more conservative out-of-London enterprise boards. You haven't heard the last of this.

John Rentoul

PERMANENT GOVERNMENT

Sir Robert Armstrong as post-election midwife

Peter Hennessy

THERE ARE no civil servants left in Whitehall with first-hand experience of how to put a coalition government together. The last time the Civil Service played a midwife to such a birth was May 1940. It was relatively simple, once Atlee had made it clear under which premier Labour would serve.

Next time, if next time there be, it will not be so straightforward. The Alliance by definition will be involved. Policy bargaining would follow a hung result as would deals on matters like proportional representation and freedom of information. The British constitution could be redrawn on the back of envelopes by politicians physically exhausted by a long election campaign, nervously exhausted by the closeness of the result and kept going by the energy charge that comes when great career ambitions are on the brink of fulfilment.

It is a prospect to send tidy-minded, continuity-conscious permanent secretaries into what passes as a lather in their cool world. The hapless Sir Robert Armstrong, Secretary of the Cabinet, could find himself once more the centre of unwelcome media attention. Due to retire next Easter, Mrs Thatcher has extended his term in case Sir Robert and Sir William Heseltine, the Queen's private secretary, have to steer the British system, with Bagehotian dignity and efficiency, through shoals of uncertainty and unseemliness.

Whitehall is, to use a house phrase, on a learning-curve. So sensitive is the issue that the Cabinet Office declined to send a representative to a private seminar on the subject at a university 'somewhere in England' last month though they did ask for a note of the proceedings which, I gather, they will get.

> ***'The British constitution could be redrawn on the back of envelopes by politicians physically exhausted by a long election campaign'***

One would have hoped that as all 56 million of us are, if the election is hung, going to have to live with the joys and sorrows of minority or coalition government, the contingency planning in Whitehall and the university seminars could be a case of open covenants openly arrived at. It is not, after all, a subject on which Mr Peter Wright has written a book. But such longings for the luxuries of an open society pass as naiveté in mid-Eighties Britain.

Some have been prepared to go on record about it. The issue arose in a series of radio interviews I conducted for the *Analysis* programme on BBC Radio 4 which was devoted last week to the subject of policy-making in opposition. I discovered that in 1983 the Alliance had made use of the Douglas-Home Rules which permit contact between Whitehall and opposition spokesman when an election is imminent. David Owen went to see the Chiefs of Staff about defence.

This time round the Alliance will for reasons of credibility have to behave like parties of coalition if not of government. But David Owen has said publicly he has nothing to say to Sir Robert Armstrong, the pivotal figure at the 'Douglas-Home' stage. Dr Owen acknowledges that at the coalition bargaining stage Sir Robert would be active if Mrs Thatcher was engaged in the discussions. But if the dealing was between the opposition parties 'there'd be no need for Sir Robert Armstrong to be involved'.

> ***'The Queen would have to say "see if you can form a government". The only person with the unique relationship with whoever was trying to form the government is the Secretary of the Cabinet'***

This is not a happy position for Whitehall's chief midwife to be occupying in the post-election maternity ward. It is doubly unfortunate as Dr Owen *can* envisage a permanent secretary, such as Sir Clive Whitmore at Defence, being brought into coalition building discussions on a minimum nuclear deterrent.

The Armstrong factor is important. For as Sir Clive's predecessor at the Ministry of Defence, Sir Frank Cooper, said in his *Analysis* interview: 'The Queen would have to appoint someone [and] say "Well, you see if you can form a government" . . . The only person [with] the unique relationship with whoever was trying to form the government is the Secretary of the Cabinet and one could certainly see him acting as a go-between the various party leaders and probably in both directions. From there on, you're on relatively untried, untested ground'. Thanks to Dr Owen's animus towards Sir Robert, coalition-building could be on uncertain ground even before that. □

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WASHINGTON DIARY

Someone is singing in the White House again. Wearing his straightest face, Attorney General Ed Meese told the world on 25 November about the bizarre Iranian arms deal of which the President was not fully (the transcript says 'fully') informed. And Washington slammed into boggle overdrive.

As Meese vainly tried to pin the whole thing on two military stiffs — one junior, one a cypher — a low moan swept the pressroom. Something like euphoria yoked to mock-horror flooded every listening hack brain, along with the usual urge to dramatise and label. It was Carter again! It was Watergate again! No, it wasn't, said Reagan-observer Lou Cannon of the *Washington Post*: but it would be Waterloo, and the best story ever.

The question is, on what to hang this creaking gate? The Soviets try to call it Irangate; and with fresh heads about to roll when the inquiry and the hearing start, it is no longer safe to call it Ollygate, after Reagan's Rambo, Lieutenant-Colonel Oliver North, former envoy to the National Security Council. The Washington press wants a Regangate, and then a Bushgate, and then what?

By the time the President was unwisely launching Thanksgiving turkey the next day, no turkey metaphor was too shrieking for press rhetoric. 'I guess I'm going to be the turkey' capped Chief of Staff Don Regan even more unwisely from the Western White House. The prize for the most purple metaphor of the Washington press goes to Tom Shales of the *Post*. It honours the President's nickname — the Gipper — taken from an early film of his, and it is — Gipperdammerung.

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Of greatest danger to the White House in the hectically snowballing Iranian crisis was the odd fact that, till last weekend, the White House did not appear to know its own danger. It had to be told nobody believed Meese by its own Republican Party leaders, Senators and House members; and also by Nancy Reagan. Ronald Reagan was suddenly diminished, a fragile figure of drooping shoulders and slowed gait, damnably out of touch. Uncharacteristically, he did not bother to reply to the more personal press questions, such as 'When will you be coming back, sir?' As Senator Daniel Moynihan said, his rule has been revealed as 'not functioning. Anarchical'.

By last weekend, North had been pronounced a scapegoat by Middle America, and the ABC television polls said 67 per cent of Americans no longer believed Ronald Reagan. Moynihan felt Reagan could still save his own life politically, and his own last two years in office; but only by publicly confessing his fault and making a clean breast of it. Senator Richard Lugar, who used to head the foreign relations committee at the Senate, felt the same: but said people like Henry Kissinger and Zbigniew Brzezinski and Jeane Kirkpatrick would have to be parachuted into the seats of the incompetents and cyphers right away.

But Reagan hates firing people, and hates decisions. Yes, at least one canary was Deep Throating it again at the White House; and possibly it was the old Deep Throat himself. Bob Woodward recently confirmed that Deep Throat is still alive and well and working in Washington; but that he would keep their promise not to disclose his identity till his death. Some journalists interpret this to mean that he was really our old friend, Unattributable Sources plural — or a composite of several.

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Olly North is not the only ex-Marine involved in the Iranian arms crisis. Secretary of State George Shultz, former Chief of Staff Jim Baker, current chief Don Regan, and ex-adviser from the NSC Robert 'Bud' McFarlane, are all ex-Marines. (This does not tar Shultz, who may yet come out unscathed, though he has offered to resign.)

'A few good men' is the Marine Corps slogan; and this explains why Ollygate has 'Marines' stamped all over it. 'A few good men screwed up' should be the Ollygate epitaph; for the Marine Corps ethos soaks the entire opera buffo. As an elite corps programmed to obey, and obey absolutely, Marines are held to be daring but dumb. Some are quartered in my little corner of South East Washington. Dubbed jarheads, because their shaved scalps show their ears off, they jog miles around the Mall in all weathers, driven by an epic sense of mission.

In Vietnam, North won a silver and a bronze star and two Purple Hearts, and was your quintessential jarhead. Marines split into two factions there: the 'pinko, commie fags' with cooler heads; and the 'fascist pig-dogs'. No prizes for guessing Olly's camp. He is also famed for his deep born-again Christian convictions.

Known as 'Field Marshal North' — satirically — North took telecommunications equipment around the world with him, often using false names. He could call the President from anywhere in the world at a moment's notice. Reagan is said to be very fond of him, which may account for the look on his face when he told the nation he was sacking North before North himself knew, and a full day after North tendered his resignation. Last weekend, Reagan called him a 'national hero'.

Perhaps their bond sprang from their similarity. North had little to do with Donald Regan, Reagan's imperious Chief of Staff. He has a highly developed sense of theatre (he once parachuted out of a sick plane onto the Contras field airstrip in Honduras) and, at this stage, he may also have a bit of a fantasy problem. He is extremely bitter.

America feels very sorry for Olly just now. He will have a lot of beans to spill, by God, and the question is, will he? He may be just angry enough to go back on the honour of a Marine.

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My own two best Deep Throats — let's just call them Slabface and the Amazon — feel that all roads will lead to George Bush, despite his futile efforts to be invisible and hang on to future office.

A World In Action documentary called 'The President's Private War', which has just won a silver medal at the New York Film Festival, had the distinction of uncovering much of the background to all of this a year ago, including the Israeli involvement in Central America and North's own role. Produced by Mike Beckham and researched by Don Jordan, it revealed all the covert Contra funding and training by the CIA. A sort of mystique grew around North last year, when journalists learnt that North had apparently pulled his photo from every picture agency and file in the land, including his old Naval Academy yearbook, where the legend reads 'No matter where his career may lead, he knows his thoughts will always be "the Corps, the Corps, the Corps"'.

My own coup as a researcher on the programme was to find a photo of North by sheer accident. Pursuing the photo used by the *Washington Post* last August when North met Contra leaders with Reagan in the White House, I met a brick wall both at the *Post* — 'no, no, it was a White House pic,' they said — and at the White House, who said it was the *Post*'s. I finally learnt it had been leaked down the AP wire from Miami, allegedly by the Contras. In despair, I rooted out an unusably bad copy from the Library of Congress. As a final shot I tried the White House. I could only have one of the August shots *with* the Contras but *without* North, they said. Had North gone to the trouble of airbrushing himself right out of the photo? I tore down to the White House, and stuck the photo, without looking at it, straight into the Federal Express envelope under the watchful eyes of the friendly but careful staff.

But the staff had been *too* helpful: the photograph was the undoctored version. When it reached the other end, Don Jordan was surprised to take out a photo of the Contras and President Reagan and . . . Field-Marshal Oliver North, standing just to one side.

A few good men screwed up again.

Elgy Gillespie

Elgy Gillespie is a freelance reporter based in Washington.

ROGER WODDIS

Jaws 4

In an interview with Time *magazine President Reagan likened the press to 'sharks circling, with blood in the water.'*

Welcome the wild-eyed killer
Who comes to your garden gate,
The monster that crawls from the graveyard
Displaying his fangs of hate,
But beware the Elasmobranchii,
The sharks of the fourth estate.

They move in murderous circles
When hope of relief has gone,
Their lust for the truth excites them
Far more than their love of Ron,
Their ravenous hunger drives them
To ask, 'What the hell's going on?'

What sharpens their teeth to razors
The victim can only guess;
Their eyes are forever open
And widen in times of stress,
Alert for the Contra-versy
That feeds the unsleeping press.

It's perfectly safe to paddle,
If that is your dearest wish;
The reckless who swim in deep waters
May end as a devil's dish,
But compared to the homespun hero,
The shark is a harmless fish.

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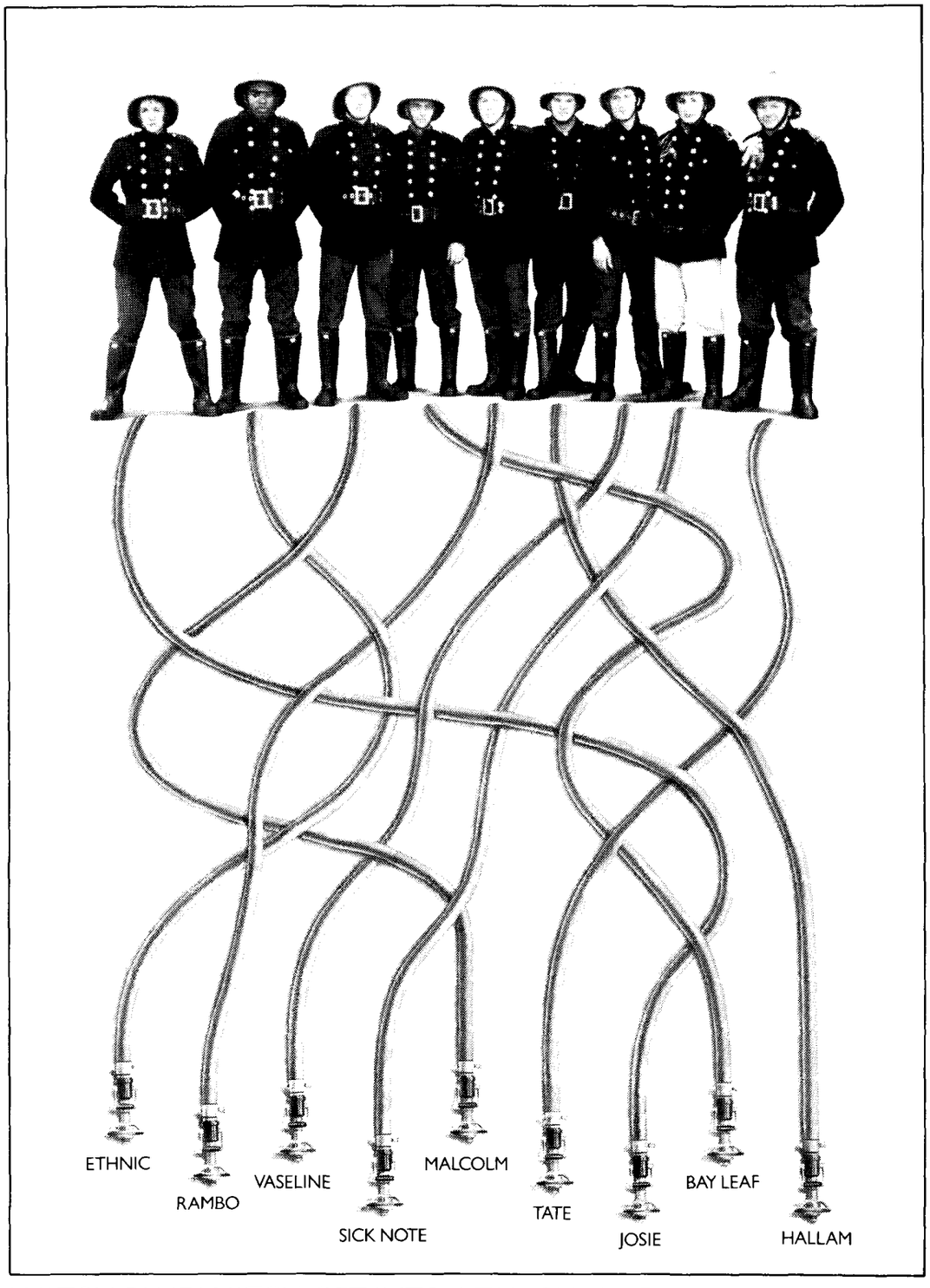

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The MI5 affair: can the spooks be trusted?

Would a Kinnock government face secret treachery from Britain's security services?* DUNCAN CAMPBELL, PATRICK FORBES *and* JOLYON JENKINS *report on the implications of the MI5 affair

HAVE BRITAIN'S security and intelligence services plotted against an elected socialist government? The answer is yes, on both of the last two occasions when Labour has assumed power. Rumours of a 1975 'MI5 plot' against Wilson have long been rife. But now the government has been forced to acknowledge that the plot did happen. The admission came from Cabinet Secretary Sir Robert Armstrong in the course of his evidence in the case to stop ex-intelligence officer Peter Wright publishing his MI5 memoirs.

An earlier plot against the first Wilson government — in 1968 — has already been acknowledged by some of those who knew of it. So far as its goals were concerned, that plot was little short of a plan for a coup d'etat. The plot originated in the armed forces, and key figures who discussed the moves against Wilson have been identified. On that occasion, MI5 too identified some of the plotters, and informed the Home Secretary.

But the 1975 plot originated in MI5 itself. Full details of the episode have yet to emerge, although much is known to be in Wright's as yet unpublished manuscript. In court in Australia, Sir Robert Armstrong admitted that there was a plot, and that it involved a handful of officers — 'perhaps without the knowledge of the top management of the service'.

In court last month, Armstrong said that there would probably have been an inquiry afterwards. But he hadn't seen the results of any such inquiry. So, conveniently, he couldn't offer any details. He did tell the court that 'I don't want you to think I approve of MI5 plotting against the Government of the day'.

The situation facing a future Labour government will, if anything, be worse than that Harold Wilson faced in the 1970s. It's already been confirmed in the Australian case that leading Labour figures — such as Kinnock's Press Secretary Patricia Hewitt — have been fallaciously branded by MI5 as 'communist sympathisers'. Armstrong wouldn't say what the results of an inquiry into those slurs had been — or whether they had now been removed.

Clive Ponting, who had to work with MI5 officials when he recently headed the Ministry of Defence's legal secretariat, says he found senior MI5 staff he met to be far to the right: 'They're utterly reactionary, tucked away in their little world of their own'. Intelligence officers who've recently left MI5 describe the lower levels in MI5 as being more broadly based and professionally distant from politics. But no one doubts that the service is biased well to the right of the British political spectrum; that much seems to be built in.

Ponting found no evidence of individual ministerial control of the Security Services, through the Defence Ministry or anywhere else:

> Essentially what they don't choose to tell (the Prime Minister), he cannot know about. It all works on the traditional Whitehall assumption that there are reasonable men in charge.

In effect, MI5 were not supervised in their duties, and would be free to change direction again at whim: 'If they were like that with Wilson, think what they're going to be like with Kinnock'.

The threat a Kinnock administration might face is the fallout from MI5's general change of direction in the mid-1970s, when its sights shifted from the KGB to radical domestic targets. MI5 then categorised the National Council for Civil Liberties and other left-wing groups as registered 'subversive organisations'. The Service's resources were diverted from monitoring Soviet bloc intelligence activity into spying on left-wing politics in Britain.

THE EXACT DETAILS of the anti-Wilson 'plot' are still unclear although its elements are not. Suspicion was focused on the loyalty of several of Wilson's friends. So they felt free to make the Leader of the Opposition a surveillance target, and to continue operating even when he became their titular director.

Sir Frank Cooper, who was until 1982 a member of the only intelligence oversight body Britain has (PSIS — see below), says that MI5's work at the time didn't amount to a 'plot'. But some intelligence officers certainly did not trust Wilson, and he might well have been put under surveillance. He told us this week: 'I think there's always been doubts as to who Wilson associated with, there's always been worries about that'. Mentioning some of Wilson's friends, Cooper added: 'I think if you've got a Prime Minister who has got friends of a doubtful character, then you've got to be careful'.

The conduct of an official inquiry into the anti-

The woman in the know

THE WOMAN in the picture, taken earlier this week, is a senior MI5 officer. Her name is Stella Rimington. Her job puts her at the heart of the current spy controversy, since she's the woman across whose desk pass MI5's reports to Whitehall on 'subversives' in Parliament — together with those on other political figures, 'subversives' in the media and education. If Kinnock's phone was tapped, she'd know it.

Mrs Rimington heads 'F2' division, part of 'F' branch, which handles all domestic subversion. A part of her division, 'F2R', produces what Whitehall calls 'Box 500' reports, which give details of what MI5 chooses to tell Whitehall about its targets. It also writes reports using material from 'C' branch, which deals with Whitehall's protective measures to stop government leaks. Among the trade union leaders who have been the subject of 'F' branch surveillance in the past have been Jack Jones and Hugh Scanlon — reports on them went to Harold Wilson; more recently, it has monitored the activities of Arthur Scargill.

Stella Rimington was born Stella Whitehouse in Croydon in 1935; her father was a mechanical engineer. The family later moved to Nottinghamshire, where her mother still lives. When she was 12, Stella went to Nottingham High School for Girls. She went on to Edinburgh University and graduated in 1958 with an MA. Four years later, aged 27, she married John Rimington, who is now equally distinguished as director of the Health and Safety Executive. John Rimington's family also hail from the county; he himself went to Nottingham High School. At the time of the marriage Stella Whitehouse described herself as an 'archivist'. John Rimington was then working in the Board of Trade, but was on secondment to the Treasury, researching the implementation of decimal currency.

The couple have two daughters and live in a large house in the more fashionable part of Islington, North London. Despite his wife's sensitive job, Mr Rimington has until recently been happy to list his address in *Who's Who*. When they moved to a new house around the corner, however, he took it out. In his spare time Mr Rimington walks, gardens, and watches cricket. She shops at Jaeger. ●

Research by Jane Thomas

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Wilson operation appears to be confirmed by a 1976 letter the then MI5 Director-General Sir Michael Hanley wrote to Peter Wright, then still in MI5. Hanley wrote: 'It would take some imagination to say that things are improving here, but they are certainly no worse than when you went away'. Then, in an apparent reference to the investigation of a group of officials who had taken it on themselves to investigate Wilson, he added: 'The firm is doing quite well and passed the recent examination.'

Underlying the elements of high farce in the Wright saga are more serious issues. Wright's book will add new weight to the evidence of consistent lawbreaking by Britain's security and intelligence services. Wright plans to detail his involvement in phone tapping in Britain, and in the extensive bugging of London's embassies. The lawbreaking goes as low as driving offences for swapping vehicle registrations, to the now well-established plot to murder President Nasser.

The most recent publicity has cast light on one of MI5's most shadowy corners — the work of MI5's Whitehall 'fixer'. Most of the press has been coy about properly naming Bernard Sheldon, who is officially MI5's legal adviser. But Bernard Sheldon's name, and role, needs to be brought more fully into the limelight. Every time a security fiasco threatens to cause political embarrassment to MI5, Sheldon is on the scene. He is a regular visitor to the government Law Officers, and the Home and Defence Ministries. He has attended most major spy cases, and intervenes with the police or prosecuting authorities if their work might threaten MI5's interests.

In a separate report (see box), we've also identified the work and career of the Assistant Director of MI5's 'F' Division, whose special section circulates MI5's reports of 'domestic subversion' to a select few in Whitehall.

THE RESULT of 'F' Division's work is that many of the future generation of new Labour parliamentary candidates are already likely to be on file with MI5, although their loyalty is not in doubt. Organisations such as NCCL or the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament have for years been bracketed as 'subversive'; 'subversive front'; 'subversive dominated'; or 'subversive penetrated'. All but the last designation empowers MI5 staff to open files on all national and local officials and leaders as being — at best — subversive 'sympathisers'. Militant and other Trotskyist groups are regarded, like the Communist Party, as fully-fledged 'subversives'.

Such classifications were, for example, the justification for MI5 opening files on two recent NCCL senior officers — Patricia Hewitt, the former General Secretary, and Harriet Harman, the former Legal Officer (now the Peckham MP). In testimony this summer former intelligence officer Cathy Massiter has said:

> NCCL has been of interest to the Security Service . . . since the 1940s. In the mid 1970s, it was reassessed as a subversive organisation largely because of a decision by the Assistant Director of the section in which NCCL was being studied.

This view was not based on the normal MI5 rule that, at least, Communist Party members should be numerically dominant in the leadership of such a group. It was just that NCCL had taken a similar stance on such issues as police and security service accountability to various far left groups. On this basis alone (and personal bias in MI5) it was classified with them.

The result was that not just Hewitt and Harman, but every other NCCL national official, employee, and branch secretary went on file in Curzon Street as a 'communist sympathiser'. Indeed, for the period that NCCL and its like were regarded as subversive, 'any member may and usually would be placed on record by the Security Service'.

Declining interest in NCCL — but surveillance continues

By the time Cathy Massiter had become the MI5 desk officer responsible for watching NCCL, real interest in the organisation had declined. Nevertheless, the cachet lingered, so that even though Massiter says that some of the files on officials at the level of branch secretary were then destroyed, local police Special Branches continued to penetrate and report on NCCL local groups' activities. National level surveillance didn't stop either. In 1982, an MI5 agent attended NCCL's national conferences, and reported directly back to the Curzon St headquarters.

The CND and NCCL cases for illegal surveillance have revealed that:

- Harriet Harman has been on record with the Security Service since she became NCCL's legal officer. She is recorded as a 'communist sympathiser' — although there is no evidence that she had any sympathies with the Party.
- Patricia Hewitt was recorded in the same category. And although her phone wasn't itself tapped, her file would contain intercepts of conversations she had with those who were intercepted.
- That included intercepts of conversations with one of the present writers (Campbell), whose phone was covered by an interception warrant.

With independent journalists and lawyers, however, MI5 have been in even greater difficulties about the appropriate category in which to justify starting a file. Eventually they settled on the all-purpose bureaucratic fiction of 'unaffiliated revolutionary'.

Security assessments on newly elected MPs like Harriet Harman are passed on to the Cabinet Office. If the Cabinet Secretary thinks such information should be used to prevent their appointment to government office, or to certain select committees, he can pass the derogatory information on to the Prime Minister or other senior party leaders.

Politicians from across the spectrum acknowledge the dangers. Tory MP Jonathan Aitken has long had good connections with the intelligence services, including the MI5 faction now known as the 'Young Turks'. He said this week that MI5

> should be under tighter democratic control. They have a tremendously introspective posture (and) this leads them to believe any kind of passing rumour. The kind of fishing trips that went on, I regard as dotty.

THE ORTHODOX lines of control to MI5 (and the other three intelligence services, M16, GCHQ and the Defence Intelligence Staff) are not to individual ministries as is normally supposed in the press. Accountability stops with the Cabinet Secretary and the Permanent Secretaries committee on the Intelligence Services that he chairs, PSIS. PSIS oversees the secret intelligence budget of almost a billion pounds a year; and through a co-ordinator of intelligence approves the agencies' overall targets. The top man in all this is thus Sir Robert Armstrong.

Last week, Armstrong was asked his view of a future day when Labour came to power. What would happen when people like Hewitt and Harman occupied senior positions in government. 'Was he living in terror?,' Wright's lawyer asked. 'I don't think I live in terror of a future Labour government,' Armstrong replied. Did he mean that a Labour government with radical policies really caused him no concern — or merely that he was satisfied that Whitehall could bring it under control?

The contrast between the government and MI5's treatment of Peter Wright and the tolerance extended to acceptable exposés by Chapman Pincher and Nigel West has yet to be explained — as does the length to which the government is still prepared to go to try and stop him. It suggests that more than the general principle of Security Service confidentiality may be at stake. The difference is that Wright is not pulling punches to avoid showing that elements of MI5, at least, would be the enemies of a democratic socialist government that they didn't like. □

For interview with Dale Campbell-Savours MP, see p18.

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Afloat on a sea of procedural points

Dale Campbell-Savours MP has emerged as one of the more unlikely heroes of the Wright affair.* PATRICK FORBES *interviews him, and concludes his energies should be harnessed and directed before they damage both the Labour Party, and his mental health

IF THE BELGRANO's avenging angel is Tam Dalyell, then Peter Wright's is Dale Campbell-Savours, Labour MP for Workington. His questions pepper the House of Commons order paper: will the Attorney General consider prosecuting Lord Rothschild, Arthur Martin, and even the Editor of the *New Statesman* for their varying Official Secrets Act offences? In a recent debate, in the space of three minutes, he managed to indict most of the government, cast doubt upon the security service's competence, and request an emergency debate on Wright (to no avail).

His activities have drawn a predictable response from the Tory backbenches. Sir Anthony Grant greeted his derisive recommendation that Sir Arthur Franks be prosecuted with stern remarks about Franks's 'very splendid war record'. However, the efforts of Neil Kinnock notwithstanding, the Labour Party as a whole has been no more effusive. There is a weight of opinion that remembers other earlier Campbell-Savours campaigns, and their fruitless ends.

When new to Parliament, a local long-distance lorry driver complained about bribery on the Italian border. Campbell-Savours gave up two weeks of his summer holiday to make a clandestine truck trip. The trip ended when he fell ill, and was discovered by the Foreign Office. Then in 1981 he claimed that Ian McGregor, then head of British Steel, had threatened to halt all investments in his constituency if he did not stop criticising the corporation in the Commons — four months later the all-party Commons Privileges Committee cleared McGregor, 'in the absence of a verbatim record of their conversation'.

But so far the reasonable men of the Labour Party have been proved wrong. Campbell-Savours is actuated by something other than a simple desire to grab the headlines; there has been a consistent strain of opposition to official secrecy since his bruising experiences on the Commons Public Accounts Committee. There he 'pushed hard for every figure in the defence estimates, and when I got them, I found that every one, bar one, was already in the public domain — indeed it had probably been given at the despatch box . . . it wasn't an attempt to dupe us, just sheer laziness.' And his tactic of using parliamentary devices to 'draw attention to the inconsistencies in the application of the law by the government' has been a qualified success.

However, there are some alarming holes in his strategy, and thinking. I asked him whether he'd had any foreknowledge about the security services, or the world of intelligence. He happily admitted that he had 'absolutely no experience, knew absolutely nothing about it at all', and agreed that he was 'flying blind'. Some would argue ignorance to be a positive benefit in this context; but, alarmingly, it was exactly this lack of inside knowledge that brought Brian Sedgemore's campaign against City fraud grinding to a halt a year ago, in a welter of unprovable allegations.

This ignorance reared its head when I asked him what he thought the government's real motive in fighting an apparently hopeless case was. By way of some convoluted reasoning he argued that fear of what Wright might say about surveillance of the Wilson circle had fired them, and that this brought us close to the Prime Minister's door. He then contradicted himself, and said that *she* was egged on by MI5, who stood to lose most by an inquiry into their behaviour in the early 1970s — which would seem to bring us close to Curzon St's door. I put it to him that he had no evidence for such a view; he disarmed me by admitting he had none, but he was adept at reading Mrs Thatcher's mind ('I understand that woman, I know when she wants to go to tea in a debate') and that was all he had to go on.

THE TASK of probing the government's evasions, inaccuracies, and lies over the Wright case cannot be left to Campbell-Savours alone. There are important issues at stake, and the experience of MPs other than Campbell-Savours should be brought to bear.

First, the strain of fighting the campaign practically singlehanded is clearly beginning to tell on him. He was 15 minutes late for our meeting. When the familiar gangling figure arrived, bowed down with paper, I pointed out that we were meeting under fairly unique circumstances. He has just called for the *NS*'s prosecution under Section 2 of the Official Secrets Act, after we published extracts from ex-spy Joan Miller's *One Girl's War* (see *NS* last week). The *NS* has thus far escaped the Treasury solicitor's attentions, while the book's distributors in the UK have been injuncted.

UPP

Peter Wright's avenging angel: Labour MP Dale Campbell-Savours

As soon as I said this, he ran away. Reappearing, he explained that he had been to the Table office to check that this question had been put down — apparently it had. A few moments later, another exclamation — he'd left all his files at home. When finally we made it to his office, still more confusion. Phoning LBC to arrange an interview, he initially insisted their car arrive at 11.15, but then closed the discussion by saying he would be ready and waiting at 12.15. When I pointed out there might be some mystification at LBC, he paused . . . 'they'll understand'.

Leaving him to fight his battles alone makes it inevitable that at some stage he will fall prey to fatigue and/or paranoia, and make a mistake. Tam Dalyell's fruitless Hilda Murrell campaign is an object lesson. Dalyell is fine when he is right (Belgrano), but a disaster when he's wrong (Hilda Murrell). Then the endless procedural points, interjections in debates and shock revelations that crumble when held up against the light look like the work of an obsessive incompetent, not a tenacious backbencher.

THERE ARE THOSE in the Labour Party who would like to see Campbell-Savours drown in a sea of procedural points, and his campaign go the way of his previous fruitless obsessions. But this time, the voice of reason should not be allowed to prevail.

There are no immediate political brownie points to be obtained by pressing the attack; by and large the populace is united in viewing the Wright affair as an entertaining sideshow involving some of the odder relics of empire. But short term there's a Tory scalp on offer — the Attorney General's. As Edward Pearce pointed out in the *Daily Telegraph* last Friday, his 'propensity to chat instructively in the better sort of bar, *and* prosecute chaps for breaking Section 2 of the Official Secrets Act, is going to get him into terminal trouble before this row is out.'

And long term, the stench that emanates from l'affaire Wilson can only advance the twin causes of repeal of Section 2 of the Official Secrets Act and oversight of MI5 and MI6. The first will tell us when our security services transgress, the second will limit those transgressions.

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MEDIA

The 25 per cent solution

John Ellis

TELEVISION IS likely to change fundamentally in the next decade. Nobody can yet predict the outcome, but it's clear that the broadcasting establishment is in no shape to face the perilous times ahead. Everyone knows the BBC's problems by now: ingrained bureaucratism, weak management, lack of corporate objectives, declining programme quality. The ITV system has grave problems too. There is a chronic imbalance between the stronger regions who provide most of the programmes (e.g. Thames, Granada, Central) and the smaller areas like Scottish Television, Border, Anglia and Grampian. Overall, the major ITV companies suffer from many years of a weak management that has preferred to throw money at problems rather than seek a progressive solution.

This attitude was typical of Fleet Street, too, until Wapping overturned the habits of decades of weak management. Broadcasting's Wapping is not so far off, as the 'delicate ecology' of broadcasting (as BBC management are fond of calling it) is really just a mature oligopoly with a weak public sector component and an over-complacent monopolist commercial sector. The leviathans of broadcasting are in no shape to face the effects of the *de facto* deregulation of broadcasting that will be brought by satellite TV operating outside the control of any national government.

A broadcasting Wapping can only be avoided by introducing a measured change into the system now. The catalyst currently promoted widely is the call by independent producers for both ITV and the BBC to begin to commission programmes from them, rather than make them within their organisations, as is currently the case. The independents' target is a 25 per cent proportion of domestically produced programmes to be made independently after about five years.

Objections to this target have not, as was the case when Channel 4 was being discussed, centred on any supposed inability of independent producers to deliver such amounts of programming. Such companies have provided half Channel 4's output for the past four years, across all the major genres of programming, so no-one doubts the independents' ability to deliver any more. Objections have centred around the supposed disruption to the BBC and ITV companies, and particularly to their employees. Management mutters darkly about mass redundancies, and some executives, particularly David Elstein of Thames TV (an independent producer himself until a few months ago), have leapt into print to predict the most dire consequences.

The unions involved have been more measured in their public response, with the technicians' ACTT opposing the idea of a specific quota of independent production, but stating that it has 'no opposition to access for independents in principle, but a range of specific guarantees should be sought to protect the interests of permanently employed members and prevent casualisation'.

This fear of casualisation is what management are currently playing upon. Most of the people working on BBC and ITV in-house programmes are staff members on long-term contracts. Most people working on independent productions are freelancers. The unions involved do not oppose freelance work as such (some, like Equity, have an almost entirely freelance membership; even the TV technicians' union ACTT now has more freelance than long-term contracted members). Nor do they see permanent staff as their lever to control TV as would be the case in other industries, since the trade unions' ultimate bargaining weapon is their control of the transmission technology and their ability to pull the plugs on it.

The unions do need a substantial permanent staff membership, however, to establish the bench-marks of wage levels as most freelance rates are established as a percentage increase on salaried levels. They also, quite correctly, see the wholesale casualisation of broadcasting as the first step to the disintegration of the established strengths of British TV: its documentary production, the amount (if not the quality) of the news it produces, and those elements that used to be termed 'public service television'.

> ***'Several prolific independent production companies were founded by people who left the BBC because they felt that their conception of public service TV was being betrayed by management . . . producers campaigning for independent access to the major channels want to review those ideals'***

Many independents believe in these ideas too. Several prolific independent production companies were founded by people who left the BBC because they felt that their conception of public service TV was being betrayed by management. Indeed, the producers campaigning for independent access to the major channels are doing so in part because they want to further and renew those ideals. This is perhaps why the ACTT has no opposition to access for independents in principle, whereas it seems that the ITV companies (and the BBC to a large extent) *do* object.

Recent research has shown that casualisation may well be a management red herring. For television programme production, as measured in programme hours, has been steadily expanding in both the BBC and ITV since 1979. Developments in breakfast TV, daytime TV and so on have lead to a rate of almost 4 per cent expansion continuously over the past seven years. This rate of expansion is likely to continue, given that planned developments include a Channel 4 breakfast service; the College of the Air; night-time TV recently given a positive piloting in Yorkshire; and the ITV satellite Superchannel. With the system expanding at such a rate, the independents' target represents no more than allocating them hours proportionate to the overall expansion of television. It begins to look as though BBC and ITV managements want to continue expanding their own empires, and this is the real reason for their opposition to substantial amounts of independent production for their channels.

BOTH THE BBC and the ITV need independent production as a large component of their future broadcasting, but for different reasons. The BBC is trapped by its own expansion. The head of its daytime service, Roger Laughton, recently explained 'the daytime programmes are going to put considerable pressures on the in-house system. The BBC, as a broadcaster, is adding substantial numbers of extra hours, but as a production house is only expanding a little' (*Televisual* October 1986). In the past, the BBC would 'naturally' have provided new studios and equipment for daytime TV. Now it cannot afford them, as capital equipment costs are becoming a greater proportion of BBC expenditure at a time when the BBC's income is not keeping up with inflation.

The BBC, in other words, is having to spend rather more on equipment, and rather less on other things: chiefly the programmes that the equipment is there to make. Since independent production can use equipment in the commercial facilities sector (also used by the makers of commercials, pop promos, corporate documentaries etc), it does not have the same relation to technical resources as BBC in-house production. It can therefore ease the looming equipment shortfall in the BBC, and help reduce the squeeze on BBC programme costs caused by its increasing expenditure on equipment.

ITV's need for independent production is perhaps best demonstrated by its own creation of 'independent' production companies. Thames and Central both own separate production companies (Euston Films and Zenith respectively) which function as small production units: they produce films and series which they sell to the ITV network and abroad, and finance from a variety of sources. These flexible production units have been set up by these companies to ease the chronic problems of their in-house production methods. Management has built in large amounts of underdeployed labour over the years, relying on fresh intake of personnel to deal with increased programme hours. This internal inefficiency can only be curbed by continuous (competitive) comparison with independent production for the same company.

An expansion of the independent production sector need not damage the interests of the broadcasting unions, though it may damage the financial and power ambitions of current TV management. But it is a necessary step if British TV is to be able to function in the approaching new age of broadcasting, since it will enable BBC and ITV to become more competitive, and it will provide a firm basis for British production for new European TV channels. □

John Ellis is an independent television producer.

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ECONOMICS

What they won't tell Sid about British Gas

Jan Toporowski

A FUNDAMENTAL characteristic of Thatcherite populism is that it makes prejudice respectable. In large measure this is because of the non-commissioned officer mentality of Mrs Thatcher herself. Even after seven years as Prime Minister, her statemanship remains an aspiration rather than a reality, and her political principles remain the unreal and simplistic theories of the New Right academics whom she has sought out to clothe her preconceptions with an aura of intellectual respectability. This prejudice is translated into a political programme whose marketing orientation and sensitivity to public opinion polls betray its origins. Meanwhile public policy loses its consistency, consequence, and dedication to the public good.

Among the more prominent of these antipathies is that towards nationalised industries. When Mrs Thatcher entered Downing Street it was in the conviction that state ownership meant economic inefficiency subsidised by the consumer and paid for by the consumer. Privatisation was to galvanise public industry, and make it serve the public more efficiently.

However, it is common for people with longstanding attachments to irrational ideas to forget the original rationale for those notions. Something similar has happened to the government's attitude towards the return of public enterprises to the private sector. Initially this was intended to make them more efficient. But during the last two years the rationale for this has been to support public sector borrowing, by making public expenditure look less than it actually is, and by the promotion of wider share ownership. *The result is that public enterprises, which are often inefficient for reasons other than their status of nationalised corporations, are simply being transformed into inefficient private monopolies.*

There are, however, two (and probably *only* two) sound reasons for taking public enterprises out of the public sector as it is presently constituted. The first is that within the public sector industries may find their investment programmes needlessly constrained by limits on public sector borrowing and expenditure, imposed by financial markets that cannot distinguish between productive and non-productive expenditure in the public sector. This is what happened in the second half of the 1970s. The resulting seedy inefficiency was in large measure responsible for the upsurge in public hostility towards public enterprises.

The other reason is that within the public sector, enterprises may be used as a means of covert taxation of the public by the government. This is done by raising the return on assets which must be paid to the Treasury. The public enterprise whose 'negative external financing limit' has been so raised, simply raises its prices (i.e., collects the tax) in order to pay that higher return to the government. The electricity supply industry has done so recently, effectively imposing a tax which electricity consumers have no option but to pay, since most are unlikely to reduce consumption.

THE TWIN ISSUES of investment and covert taxation are particularly acute in the public utilities such as gas and electricity, and as British Telecom used to be. For these are all industries that depend on a high level of investment for their efficient functioning.

The present government's solution replaces the government as owner and regulator of these industries with private shareholders. To avoid the most flagrant commercial exploitation of consumers of public utility services, the government has adopted the system used in the United States for regulating the prices and activities of private monopoly utilities. This is to set up quangos (Oftel in the case of British Telecom, and Ofgas for British Gas) which are supposed to ensure that advantage is not taken of consumers by these private monopolies. But the American experience is that consumers *are* exploited despite these safeguards, in addition to having to pay, either as tax-payers or consumers, for the bureaucratic apparatus of regulation.

> ***'The logical solution: hand over ownership of the monopoly to its consumers'***

The reason is that it is very difficult for utility regulators to maintain a sufficient distance from the companies that they are regulating to enable them to make objective judgements about the balance of effective consumer interests against company interests. Very frequently the blandishments of the 'regulated' companies and common industrial interests prove stronger than formal obligations to consumers. In this way, regulators come to see things more or less the way in which the companies they are regulating see them. The loser in this is the consumer, who ends up paying for a padded-out management (often justified by the need to liaise effectively with the regulators) and for the construction of massive and often unnecessary capital projects. In this way monopoly profits are hidden as expenses, for it would not do for published profits to appear too high.

This then is the prospectus that the government offers consumers with its privatisation of British Telecom last year, and British Gas now. In fact, British Gas will not even have to disclose to its regulatory agency Ofgas the amount of monopoly profit that it makes from domestic consumers. Financial considerations are at stake here for the government too, since a highly regulated utility is unlikely to be attractive to investors, so that the proceeds of such a privatisation would be less.

THE LABOUR PARTY has recently argued, correctly, that the old alternative of nationalisation is not necessarily the best one and is not the only possible model of social ownership. But it is surprising that no-one has yet proposed what is the logical economic solution to monopoly profits: to hand over ownership of the monopoly to its consumers, either free, or in return for some charge (such as the current quarterly charge) automatically payable by consumers. This would ensure that, in theory at least, the monopoly's excess profits returned to the consumer, either in the form of improvements to the service if the profits are reinvested in the enterprise in order to raise the quality and technical efficiency of the service supplied. All of this could be achieved quite simply, without the need for any supervisory agency or cumbersome legislation limiting price increases.

In practice, of course, a number of problems are immediately apparent. There are at present 16 million gas consumers. Organising them and making the management responsive to them collectively as owners of the enterprise rather than mere purchasers of its output, would clearly be difficult. But to put the problem into perspective: British Telecom, which is now the private company with the largest number of shareholders, has more than one and a half million of them. Its management hardly expects all of them to turn up to its annual general meetings, and would certainly be unable to cope if they did. Yet it manages to operate as efficiently as any other commercial organisation of similar size. Having sixteen million shareholders may in practice be no more troublesome than having one and a half million.

Finland's telephone service, owned by its subscribers, is a good example. The national company is split up into local companies owned by consumers in a certain limited geographical area: these companies in turn jointly own, with the government, the central trunk lines and international terminals. In the case of British Gas, local consumer-owned companies would jointly own the central gas pipelines and off-shore gas installations. A simple mechanism, such as making the managing director's, (or all the directors') salaries payable only after they have been approved by a minimum number of shareholders at an annual general meeting of the company, would then be enough to make the companies responsible to the needs of their consumers.

The relatively minor problems of the status of business users could then be determined in the constitution of local gas companies. The legitimate interests of company employees, local and central government, and other companies which may be called upon to finance joint investments could be safeguarded by giving these interests the right to nominate a certain number of directors. Their relative proportions on the boards of local companies would reflect the balance of power between consumers, employees or trades unions, government, and overall industrial interests.

Such a scheme would not be popular with the present government, even if it was willing to consider such good ideas. This is because to implement it the government would have to be honest about the true levels of public spending, taxation and effective public borrowing. But it deserves wider public consideration because it is the only way of *giving to the people* public utilities with the potential for economic efficiency and a high standard of service. □

Jan Toporowski is a City economist.

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ESSAY

Giving it back: funding the nation's literature

As Labour struggles to formulate its policy on the arts, novelist and poet **MAUREEN DUFFY** *suggests an approach to the printed word*

LET ME BE anecdotal. I grew up in a small country town whose only theatre, gallery, concert hall was at school. By the time I left to return to London at 15, I had seen three live professional theatre productions, one given by a company touring a Shaw play, *The Applecart*, which visited our school, Robert Edison's *Hamlet* as a school outing to the Bristol Old Vic, and my first modern play, Ted Willis' *No Trees in the Street* on a day trip to Bath just before I left for good.

I had never heard a live professional orchestra or seen an original painting, other than those done by my schoolmates. The nearest I had come to it was on the same day trip which had included the matinée at the Theatre Royal Bath when my mother took in — a new and stunning experience for both of us — an Arts Council touring exhibition of Van Gogh reproductions. I had, however, seen a live poet, for Cecil Day Lewis had come to our school and confirmed my determination to be a writer.

I suspect that not only the Van Gogh prints but the live poet, touring theatre company and of course the Bristol Old Vic were all subsidised by the emergent Arts Council, just as the books in my early life were, with the exception of those that came as Christmas or birthday presents, provided by subsidy to school and public library. I give my experiences at this length not because they are unique but precisely because they were, and still are, those of generations of children and indeed adults in this country. Since the Second World War opened our eyes and ears to the vast unsatisfied, or sometimes unstimulated, appetite in the British people for that thing we can barely bring ourselves to name, called 'culture' or 'the Arts', we have been struggling as a society to make the artistic experience more widely available.

The Arts Council had the job expressed in its charter of rebuilding our artistic base and spreading access to it throughout the social and geographical length and breadth of the land. Now let me quote from the chapter on the Arts Council in Charles Osborne's *Giving It Away: Memoirs of An Uncivil Servant*:

> At a recent meeting, we found ourselves considering how to provide concerts of orchestral music in rural areas. But should not rural areas be rural, and metropolitan areas be metropolitan? No one in his right mind expects to find hosts of golden daffodils sprouting in Shaftesbury Avenue.

We do however expect to find them round the corner in Park Lane, in the hundreds (for all I know thousands) of public and royal parks which strike an elegant balance of *rus* in *urbe* in towns and cities all over the country, and have done in growing numbers ever since the 17th century. We expect trees in our streets wherever possible, individual and communal gardens and allotments, bowling greens, heaths and commons, Battersea Park and the descendants of Charles II's wildfowl on the Serpentine and its equivalents in Manchester, Newcastle, Nottingham. The argument is palpably false.

At this point I must declare an interest. I served on the Arts Council literature advisory panel for four years, from January 1975 to December 1978, under the chairmanship of first Roy Fuller and then Melvyn Bragg, having been appointed by the then Labour Minister for the Arts, Hugh Jenkins, and I have received four bursaries in my time, two from the literature panel to write two books which I did and two from the drama panel for two plays whose productions both foundered. I am mentioned three times in the book: twice in lists quoted from *Private Eye* and the *Gloucestershire Echo* and once as 'a novelist' allegedly rebuking the author for a value judgement. '"Better," Maureen growled, "is an elitist word."'

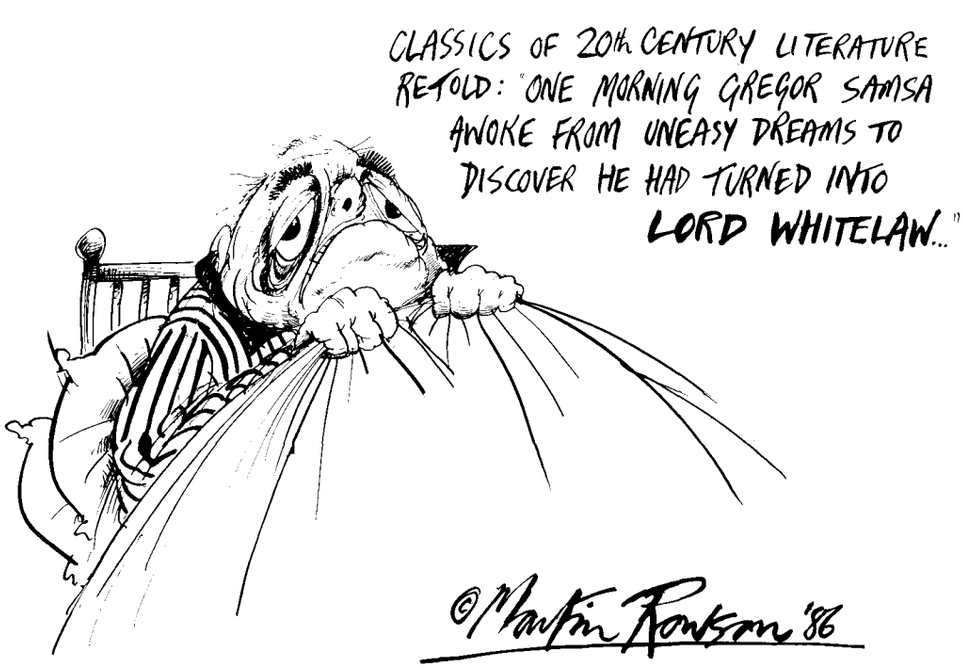
Nonsense as this quotation clearly is when wrenched out of context, it does nevertheless encapsulate two attitudes to funding and arts provision which the book and its author force into unnecessary antagonism: the pursuit of excellence and what I will call, as a useful shorthand, the democratisation of the arts. It isn't my intention to spend my space in refuting and correcting *Giving It Away*, or even in throwing up my hands in mock horror at Charles Osborne's schoolboy rudery, but the central premise of the book must be considered because it has, I believe, helped to bring into disrepute the whole concept of state funding for literature, it continues to affect the thinking on literature provision of both the present government and the Arts Council and has threatened the complete demise of the literature department. To quote from the Arts Council's policy document *The Glory of the Garden*:

> English literature is sustained by a large and profitable commercial publishing industry. It is a basic ingredient in the school curriculum. It is available to the public through the public library system. In these circumstances, the impact of the Arts Council's subsidy for literature other than poetry is marginal.

Osborne himself doesn't quite accept this. He continues to advocate some spending on literary magazines to enable them to seek out new talents, and on a few publishers of fiction and poetry. He is against direct payment to writers by grants or bursaries and castigates the writers' unions for their attempts to get more money paid to the writers themselves rather than through subsidising the processes of the book trade and thereby the readers. It is arguable that it's a union's duty, in return for its members' subscriptions, to fight for their improved pay and conditions; but in fact the writers' organisations have always concerned themselves with the whole field of literature provision, as the current Writers' Guild of Great Britain (the TUC-affiliated union) policy document makes quite clear.

In his letter of application for the post of Literature Director in 1971, Charles Osborne put forward a perfectly sound principle for literature funding: 'Intervention is required at three points: those at which our literature is written, is published and is bought.' That principle remains true and it is the greatest pity that in spite of sub-committees which worked, often for months, on detailed schemes to carry this out, the literature director had, by the time of his retirement, seemingly abandoned in principle writers, booksellers and the public in favour of a handful of small publishers. It's perhaps not surprising that the Arts Council itself became doubtful of the value of literature subsidy.

Behind this abandonment lies the elitist (there, I have used the coining) view that in any art form we can know categorically what is 'the best': in Charles Osborne's terms 'the first rate' as against 'the untalented'. Each of us has, of course, a hierarchy of creators and works which speaks


CLASSICS OF 20th CENTURY LITERATURE RETOLD: "ONE MORNING GREGOR SAMSA AWOKE FROM UNEASY DREAMS TO DISCOVER HE HAD TURNED INTO LORD WHITELAW..."
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loudest to us. But mine aren't the same as yours. My 'best' may be Purcell and yours Beethoven, or in contemporary terms mine Britten, yours Tippett or, closer and even more contentiously, mine Harrison, yours Raine. When public funding is involved however it isn't, or shouldn't be, a matter of me upholding my preference to the exclusion of yours but, above a recognisable level of craftsmanship, of giving the audience the greatest opportunity to experience the works for themselves in the knowledge that different artists and their works have different things to say to different members of the public.

Richness and diversity should be the aims of subsidy, funding should be spread as widely as possible, not concentrated in support of my own passionately held tastes, and those who are responsible for the distribution of money must be able to discriminate between the exercise of private and public judgment. This is particularly true in the case of works by unknown or new creators.

Other departments of the Arts Council support their primary creators either through direct commissions or through grants to organisations which include a sum to be paid to playwright, composer or visual artist as part of the package. In the case of non-dramatic writers, however, there is no masking organisation except a putative publisher and therefore the grant has to be made direct. Writers are on the whole used to supporting themselves: either by non-writing jobs or journalism or by alternating non-fiction books with fiction, both prose and poetry. From time to time they need stretches free from other tasks or, if they are full-time but not bestselling novelists, they need supplementary income because the return on the average print run of a novel, 3,000 copies at ten per cent of the retail price, are obviously too little to live on. Yet we, the public, need more than a handful of best sellers if English literature is to survive as an art.

Grants, bursaries and indeed prizes can all help, but there are also ways in which writers can be paid for services which spring from the nature of their specialisation: writers' tours, in schools and education generally, in residencies attached to institutions and workplaces of many kinds. There are hundreds of people all over the country who want to improve their writing skills, either to see whether they might become professionals themselves or as a way of understanding themselves, their society and history. There is no shortage of jobs for writers but only, as in the building trade, of money to pay them.

The regional arts associations are particularly effective in administering such schemes, which were originally devised by the Arts Council literature advisory panel and, under the terms of *The Glory of the Garden*, quite rightly devolved — but with no provision for increased funds to carry them on. Subsequent pressure has made a reluctant improvement but the number of residencies for a population of 50-odd million remains pitifully small, although a public conference held to discuss the issue agreed in asking for 100 to be seeded throughout the country.

Writing is on the whole unattractive to the private sponsor. As the chairman of a business sponsorship committee put it to me: 'Your problem is that words have meaning.' Writers should perhaps feel flattered at this remark, which seems to give us explosive status, but the truth is that unless it is an award that carries Booker razzamatazz there is little return in either prestige or advertising to attract that new patron, the business sponsor, who is to relieve the state — which, in one form or other, prince, church or republic, has always been the chief patron of the arts — from the burden of literary funding.

The most obvious and just way of getting money to the primary creator of books is through the scheme for Public Lending Right, devised by writers themselves and made law by the last Labour government. Alas that the amount of money allocated to it in real terms has dropped since its implementation. It nevertheless remains the best way of paying writers for their public library service. To be anecdotal again: last year I, or rather the totality of my books in public libraries, were read by nearly a hundred thousand people for which I received nearly £1,300. It has emerged from the facts produced by the running of the scheme that for many writers who aren't best-sellers their chief point of contact with readers is the public library. What, therefore, we would ask of a future Labour Arts minister is real support for the best administered (in terms of both cost and efficiency) PLR scheme in the world, and an increased rate per loan that would give writers the return this public service deserves.

There will however be little point in this if government, national and local, allows the public library service to become a cultural NHS (No Hope Service?) with buildings empty of books and readers. Without investment in education, which includes school libraries, the writers' audience will shrink anyway. Already it is rare to find boys doing 'A' level English. Vocationally oriented education re-enhances all the old divisions of sex and class by suggesting that technology is for boys, and the humanities for girls and those who can afford an all-round education, and, of course, with bitter irony, the unemployed.

Following the Osborne first principle, people need to be encouraged to buy more books and given the facilities to do so. Britain, in spite of a recent mini-boom of chains, is still desperately short of bookshops, especially in post-industrial areas. One of the activities of the literature advisory panel which doesn't get mentioned in *Giving It Away* was the committee which set up a scheme for capitalising and supporting community, or more precisely non-profit distributing, bookshops in places where there were no commercial ones. This included bookshops in schools, adult education colleges, arts centres and theatre foyers as well as free-standing ones. They functioned as literary centres, local publishers, meeting places for local writers and performance spaces for readings.

A similar committee investigated ways to help the small private bookseller who needs rate and tax relief to establish shops where there are none, especially in development areas, or to open book ordering points in public libraries.

One major disincentive to book buying for many people is the difficulty of finding the book they want within a reasonable time, especially if it isn't on the chainstore booksellers' stocklist. A distribution scheme for small presses is already in operation and this could be extended to any publisher who wanted to use it, including specialist presses. There are many ways in which with sufficient funding people, especially children, can be encouraged to broaden their reading spectrum. I wonder about the effect on sales of a free book voucher scheme; I wonder too about subsidised first novels and poetry for public libraries and schools, about an Arts Council funded national book fair to supplement the growing number of regional festivals or for a television book programme that didn't depend on the intermittent goodwill of TV companies, about the restoration of dial-a-poem or poems in Ceefax.

This year has been a bad one for publishers, which means of course ultimately a bad one for booksellers, writers and the public. The drop in institutional buying has something to do with it but the increasing emphasis on consumer hardware and the impact of the latest toy, the video recorder, has even more. Reading literature is a unique and profound experience that can be invoked at any moment on a train or at home or outdoors. Yet, like any other art form, it has to be nurtured. Children need increasingly to be taught to read not just words but books, in competition with the easier attraction of television which needs no aquired skill. Literature is too important to be left to the whims of the market place. Like music, theatre and the visual arts it needs constant support and exposure if it isn't to be submerged and we can't even begin to quantify what the effects might be if we were to become an illiterary society.

Literature makes the news when a new poet laureate or Oxford professor of poetry is being chosen, or when big prize money is at stake, yet for most of the time its manifestations are private, fragmented, diffuse. This of course is one of its strengths and attractions, but it also means that it often seems to lack a national focus which would attract and channel funds both private and public. It seems odd that a nation whose greatest perceived glory in the eyes of the rest of the world is its literature should have no national centre for it, as it has a national theatre, a royal opera house, a national gallery, a royal music hall. The establishment of such a centre for multiple use by the public, by literary organisations and the trade, with a theatre for readings and lectures, a bookshop of course, an exhibition area, perhaps a warehouse for specialist books, certainly a bar and restaurant would seem an obvious next step to making the public more aware of literature as a (some would say the) national art. Perhaps the new South Bank Bookspace could be the kernel from which such a centre might grow. Or perhaps Birmingham might take us on instead of the Olympics.

Thousands of jobs also depend on a healthy national literature which can't be sustained by non-fiction and textbooks alone. We also, through the export of books, tapes, writers and rights, earn millions of pounds of foreign exchange. What the writers ask of a future Labour government is investment in the seedcorn from which the return is huge and unquantifiable in terms of jobs, money and the projection of our national image, and in services to the whole community. It doesn't need a fortune but I have been able to suggest even in a brief article how much more than last year's miserable half a million pounds could be used effectively without waste and without pandering to the 'greedy writers' castigated in *Giving It Away*. □

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ARTS

CINEMA

A world of difference

Judith Williamson

The Passion of Remembrance (15)
Metro

Louise (Janet Palmer) and Maggie Baptiste (Antonia Thomas): a challenge to heterosexuality

THE MORE POWER any group has to create and wield representations, the less it is required to *be* representative. Those in dominant social groups are rarely called upon to represent anything more weighty than themselves: as I tried to point out last week about Tavernier's *Round Midnight*, the fact that a film is made by a white European 'art' director is enough to induce a mass myopia about its inclusion of any racial themes at all. In the dominant cinema, stereotypes can masquerade as 'individuals'.

The problems facing the black filmmaker, however, are almost exactly the other way round. As one of the characters in *The Passion of Remembrance* says, 'Every time a black face appears on the screen we think it has to represent the whole race,' and another immediately replies, 'But there is so little space — we have to get it right.' This central exchange raises one of the key issues for those whose very access to representational forms is seen as being 'representative'.

It is an issue which runs through the history of Sankofa, the black film workshop who are collective authors of *The Passion of Remembrance*.

The 'disturbances' in Brixton in 1981 caused a number of institutions to rethink social policies: one of these was the GLC, whose commitment to cultural pluralism resulted in their funding of groups like Sankofa and Black Audio Film Collective (whose new film *Handsworth Songs* opens shortly). These were important additions to the already growing workshop movement, which successfully negotiated the historic ACTT Workshop Declaration with the film technicians' union, allowing independent films to be made at lower rates (hence on lower budgets) than the usual union minimum. These developments plus the arrival of C4 and its commitment not only to fund one-off projects but to give revenue funding to certain workshops, in particular to encourage 'multicultural' programming, have all contributed to an independent film culture which, despite an extraordinary lack of interest from the mainstream press, is expanding and flourishing.

However, for a group like Sankofa none of this lifts the burden of representation — for the invisible demand to 'speak for the black community' is always there behind the multiculturalism of public funding. What is courageous in Sankofa's project is that they have chosen to speak *from*, but not *for* black experience in Britain; and rather than fighting simply for black visibility, they are forcing the recognition of other issues which have themselves been invisible within that campaign.

At the heart of the film is an insistence on the problems of sexuality and gender which question the priorities and style of the black power movement. 'You can't hide behind your little black fist for ever,' says a young woman to a male activist — challenging not only a politics but, precisely, its representation.

This challenge is made partly by the form of the film itself, which completely eschews agit-prop or 'community drama'. Its own aesthetic places it firmly in the avant-garde tradition; there is a shifting between tenses and persons (from 'she' to 'I' and back again) reminiscent of Duras; a use of dialogue for didactic rather than narrative function reminiscent of Godard's 'political' films; a mixing of day-to-day situations and formal devices (like the 360° pan) that characterised certain intellectual experiments of the Seventies, such as the Mulvey/Wollen *Riddles of the Sphinx*. This is a stylistic heritage which the filmmakers combine with a quite different heritage — that 'passion of remembrance' which throws up the contradictions within black British culture.

Against a plain red backdrop, a black woman tells 'her story': a story of oppression within a movement against oppression. Then in a 'no-man's land' (or perhaps a piece of common ground) she argues out the unspoken conflicts within that movement with a black man: in a deserted sandpit they shout and circle, the bizarre landscape standing for an unknown political territory, possibly a place not yet found.

Between these strangely abstract exchanges, a more everyday story is told, as the film presents scenes from the lives of members of a black household — the Baptistes — and traces their differences and desires. A third visual thread repeated in the film is produced through Maggie Baptiste's montage of video images recording moments of struggle and solidarity — marches, rallies, fights and embraces — distanced by various visual devices until they become drained of their naturalistic meaning and take on an almost dream-like status.

Throughout the film, images are under discussion: there is the viewing of Maggie's video ('Maggie, is it true you're a lesbian? What have gay marches got to do with black struggle?'); there is the whole family watching a TV show where the black couple fails to win a prize; there is the heated debate about the black athlete's clenched fist at the Olympics. The film's own imagery is most successful in its more casual moments — as when Maggie and her friend Louise start dancing while getting ready to go out. At this point the film makes you feel something that, the rest of the time, it tells you.

The difficulty with the film is exactly this: there *is* so much to tell and so much to be said. This makes the dialogue rather top-heavy — it carries too much of the meaning — while the diversity of rhetorical devices sometimes distracts from, rather than reinforces, the complexity of the issues, and makes it hard to take away a visual sense of the film as a whole. But these are some of the problems of breaking new ground; which the film does, not so much stylistically — despite its stylistic self-consciousness — but politically. What is new within this (so often evasive) avant-garde format is the extraordinary boldness of the film's challenge to heterosexuality; the directness of its articulation of conflict between black women and men and between generations; the strength of its subjective voices to speak for no one but themselves. □

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ARCHITECTURE

Cant and Canary

Jules Lubbock

New Architecture: Foster, Rogers, Stirling
Royal Academy, until 21 December

THE NECESSARY MONUMENT, the title of a book written in 1970 by Theo Crosby, one of the Royal Academicians who devised this exhibition, was an early plea for recognising the importance of monuments like Tower Bridge in giving identity to a city, in contrast to the deadening uniformity of Modern Architecture and Planning. Even so, anyone proposing to build a Tower Bridge today would probably be laughed out of court. Richard Rogers, in his visionary scheme, has proposed just that — and I think it is feasible.

The essence of his idea is to sweep away one of London's worst eyesores, the 1863 Hungerford Railway Bridge, an anti-monument that blocks some spectacular views of Big Ben, and replace it with an elegant suspension bridge for pedestrians only, hung, unusually, from a single tower. Charing Cross trains would terminate at Waterloo. The plan is to unite the north and south banks of the city centre and to restore the river to its pre-19th-century glory as London's chief artery and open space, a concept briefly revived for the Festival of Britain. To this end the whole Embankment would be traffic free, as would the route from Leicester Square to Waterloo across the bridge. Further elaborations include two more futuristic towers and offshore islands for exhibition use.

The scheme is entirely in the spirit of Wordsworth's London of 'ships, towers, domes, theatres and temples', of the Shows of London and the once famous skyline of City steeples. Through the recovery of railway land the bridge might even pay for itself. I suggest it be adopted as a campaign symbol for the restoration of a London County Council and as a prospective monument (the word means memorial, record or warning) to that event.

The three architects at the RA were invited to show one completed building and one project, the latter with a bearing on London. The temptation, to which Stirling and Foster yielded, was to play safe and do a trade promotion on a finished building with a rejected London scheme thrown in. Only Rogers rose to the challenge, transforming the major axis of his entire gallery into a panoramic vista of the river with the new bridge at its head — real architecture in itself.

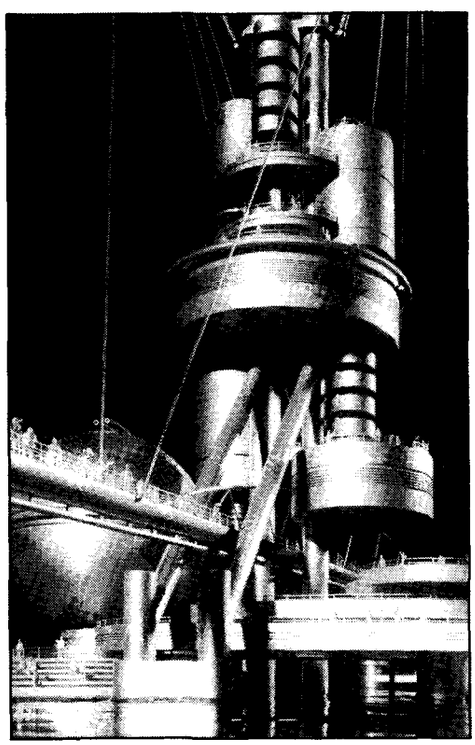
But lies, lies and more damn ideological lies than I would ever have thought possible are told in the introductory history of Modern Architecture in Britain. The first condemns the provincial British for their slowness in responding to continental Modern Architecture early this century. This neglects the fact that it was out of anxiety to catch up with the then pre-eminent Brits that the capitalists and modernisers of the backward and provincial continent sought a symbol of modernisation and efficiency in British 18th-century urbanism, such as the simplified classicism of the Georgian terrace house. Britain itself was the very model of a modern national economy and had no need for such symbols.

The RA's biggest whopper, however, is to blame the disasters of modernism in Britain not on modern architects but on post-war property developers for exploiting the supposed economic advantages of the shoebox office block. In fact both this and the associated comprehensive redevelopment were the epitome of modernist doctrine and were forced upon developers by the modern *architects* who devised post-war planning regulations. Such offices are in fact so uneconomic that they are all likely to be sentenced to the ball and chain.

Finally, the criticisms of conservationists, community groups and the users of buildings alike are written off as mere symbolic gestures. Rogers' Coin Street scheme for Greycoats was 'the target of a ritualised conflict', we are told. There was nothing *ritualised* about it: the Association of Waterloo Groups were implacably opposed to offices and wanted homes on that site. And they won. We are told that the campaign to demolish Stirling's History Faculty at Cambridge was motivated only 'ostensibly' by its real defects, principally by the animus of the New Right to a symbol of modernism. But it could never have become such a symbol had its facing bricks not dropped off.

So according to the RA there is nothing the matter with Modern Architecture that less community action, less conservationism, less provincialism and more 'sensitive' property developers could not put right with a little help from men like our three architects! The supposedly enlightened developers include men like Mr Palumbo, Mr Lipton and firms like Canary Wharf, whose sponsorship reviewers are specifically enjoined to mention. I am delighted to oblige.

Such special pleading and toughing it out is a totally inadequate response to the public's loathing of Modern Architecture, which will not have been diminished by the grotesque poster of three rocket-like pencils marked STIRLING ROGERS FOSTER homing in on a bird's eye view of London's Docklands, to remind us, no doubt, that 'architects even welcomed the tabula rasa created for them by Hitler's Luftwaffe'. This does no service, either, to Rogers' bridge. □



A Tower Bridge for today? Detail from Richard Rogers' proposed replacement for Hungerford Bridge

THEATRE

Ecstasy and agony

Victoria Radin

A Mouthful of Birds
CARYL CHURCHILL and DAVID LAN *Royal Court*
Byrthrite
SARAH DANIELS *Theatre Upstairs*
The Women
CLARE BOOTHE LUCE *Old Vic*

BRITAIN IN THE LATE 1980s is an odd place for ecstasy; and Joint Stock's **A Mouthful of Birds**, based loosely on *The Bacchae*, goes for the darker side of the Dionysian experience. A young woman hears a voice commanding her to kill the baby; a secretary runs away from her husband and amok with the neighbours; a Trinidadian medium is possessed by a white, middle-class Englishwoman; an acupuncturist fights the demon booze; a 19th-century French transsexual takes over the spirit of an unemployed body-builder. The sole example of erotic love is the case of the businessman who falls in love with a pig cruelly bound for the slaughterhouse.

But strangely, partly because it lifts us out of the humdrum and partly because it uses surprising and visually beautiful means to do so, Caryl Churchill and David Lan's play is a joyful evening. Over all of it is a sly, provocative humour which raises even the grimmest of its seven scenes of possession; and I felt tremendous relief at its acknowledgement of our unfriendlier inner voices and demons. For far too long the reigning impulse of our theatre has been control: playwrights sound off, instruct, construct and (sometimes) entertain. Here there is an attempt — though no less conscious — to let go.

It would be fascinating to know how the two writers collaborated on the piece, which bears the marks both of Lan's anthropological studies and Churchill's predilection for gender-bending and ghosts on the stairs. *Top Girls*, her work which blasphemed the women's movement of its time by suggesting that women needed children as well as work, was split between the Dionysian all-female party of its first half and the plodding, Apollonian lesson of its second; *Fen*, her play about women farmworkers, unexpectedly housed a ghost and showed women picking real potatoes out of real soil in a way which presaged the dance work of this piece. A couple of years ago Churchill was the writer on an arcane and uncharacteristically vacuous-glitzy mixed-media collaboration which now seems her first real attempt at the genre to

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which *A Mouthful of Birds* belongs: the awkwardly-named 'performance art'.

The two directors of this play are Les Waters, a theatre director associated with the Court and with Joint Stock, and Ian Spink, a choreographer who works with text. As other collaborators I should list the play's seven performers, who are either, like Stephen Goff, Philippe Girandeau and Vivienne Rochester, dancer-actors or, like Tricia Kelly, Dona Croll, Christian Burgess and Amelda Brown, actor-dancers; following the practice of Joint Stock they helped with the writing by undertaking 'field work' in the chosen subject. Their visits to spiritualists, transsexuals and ladies watching male strippers are present in the texture of the play and the daringness of their acting and movement.

The best of the scenes ring true. The two neighbours who engage in an escalating war of noise and knives with one another seem not arbitrarily crazy but driven beyond the limits of conventional bad temper; the medium hears requests for information on issues no more exciting than a lost bracelet. The segment showing the young, black, female acupuncturist — the play's two black women are breaks with racial stereotyping — is very successful because we've also seen her at her everyday world of work. At the same time, the section on Herculine Barbin, the 19th-century hermaphrodite whose belated male status condemned him to mourning both his lost girlhood and the girls he once innocently loved, stands on its own as a beautifully-written soliloquy delivered in turn by Tricia Kelly dressed as a man and Christian Burgess, the weightlifter, as he dons her cast-off lace.

Some of the scenes don't work and there are patches of obscurity. What the play lacks is precisely what the best performance pieces — such as those by Pina Bausch, whom Churchill has cited as an influence, or those of the People Show or some of Natasha Morgan — demonstrate superbly: the stamp of a single person or a long-standing group of collaborators over the whole evening, which then flows by an associative logic that seems as inevitable as it is unpredictable. *A Mouthful of Birds* is uneven; its abandon has a willed, gritted-teeth quality to it. But in a week which saw the two deadly sides of the coin of stage womanhood and writing — that is, Clare Booth Luce's brittle all-female **The Women** and Sarah Daniels' polemical **Byrthrite** (whose morals are respectively Don't trust other women and Don't trust any man) — only *A Mouthful of Birds* remains in my mind haunting and invigorating. And the combined *imprimatur* of its normally literary venue, company and authors may help to inspire the rest of our theatre to shake off its old, so-called naturalistic forms. □

TELEVISION

God!

Hugo Williams

'WHEN WE SHOWED *RAMBO* the other night there were only half a dozen complaints,' said the BBC Controller sitting in a beat-the-clock-style dock in **TV on Trial** (BBC2). 'And only half of them were about our leaving out the best bits . . .' 'Ah, the *best* bits, you say,' said Paul Sieghart, striding around like a big-time DA catching out the thicky defence witness. 'No, no,' said the Controller, 'I'm only quoting what . . .'

Well, of course he was. We all hate violence. We think it should never be allowed. Unless money is involved or power: for instance, what would happen if the Controller took all the violence off TV tomorrow? The Controller had to laugh: he'd lose his job! His frank answer left him in the strange but accurate position of violence-peddler to the nation, which he seemed satisfied with. Whether it is the same violence we export back onto the streets afterwards is a question a phoney court scene like this can only bore us with, as usual. It did; at great length (2¼ hrs).

What it needed badly was a baddy, but no one was volunteering for this role, not even the BBC reporter who filmed a murder in South Africa but regretted the way the nasty news desk had cut out the shot of the knives going up and down, which he thought was 'filmed very tastefully really'. He looked guilty as hell as he boasted about this, but he couldn't stop himself blundering on: 'One minute the boy was alive and well, the next — and this is going to sound sort of religious almost — it was almost as if you could see the spirit leaving his body.' Now what a beautiful thought that is. And to think our man was actually there filming the departure of that spirit as those knives went up and down so tastefully. You really had to stand back and admire television when you saw someone like that coming onto it, looking so alive and well still in his clean shirt and tie.

Was God there, too, peeping round the corner of the murder building? Probably not. According to Joseph Foster, six, He has a really hot bath in the evenings and, at midnight, He has a snack of scrambled eggs and ham: the first thoroughly plausible rumour so far heard about God. Joseph was appearing on **Child's Play** (ITV), a wonderful panel game in which grownups have to guess words from definitions given by youngsters. It's easy to tell who made carrots, eggs, shirts, biscuits, the Hoover, sheets, beds and paints (God), but do you know who wears a dress, lives in a cottage, wears a belt and a tea towel and prefers the music of Shakin' Stevens? (God again). One child of TV, unknown to his parents, had been living with the following apparition: 'They've got bandages round them. I've got one at home. Everyone's got one at home. That's all really.' (A Mummy.) The fun's in the kids excitability, not their cuteness, which isn't their fault.

'Mother, you had me. But I never had you . . .' went those famous heartbreaking words of John Lennon once more on *The Dream is Over*, a cartoon-like series of dance-sketches by choreographer Christopher Bruce, previewed on **The South Bank Show** (ITV). Such is the non-realistic, non-explicit, non-violent (mostly) nature of dance that our favourite medium felt obliged to leaven its treatment of the work with the usual generous sprinkling of Beatle-clips; which Bruce was very tolerant about, in the circumstances, although he'd made his bed I suppose. We saw the Cavern 'Some Other Man', which really is British beat personified, also the lesser known 'This Boy', but Bruce had in fact chosen to set songs from John's two early solo albums, *Working Class Hero* and *Imagine*. In interview he fell into all the traps: 'John's life sort of paralleled my own . . .' No kidding! But the dancing itself, even to one confirmed in the DIY approach to this art form, was oddly moving, perhaps because John's life sort of paralleled my own, or perhaps because the somersaulting, awkward, jiving, wobbling, pivoting gymnastics did seem to have understood their subject for once — in particular 'O My Love', a light, funny little duet, celebrating, of all hard things, happiness. 'I feel fine and excited and life begins at 40 they say and I do believe that,' said John, the year he was shot by some tabloid blow-out who imagined, wrongly, that *he* was Our John.

It was a timely moment to have had a new look at the 'Fall of LSD' in *The Beyond Within* on **Everyman** (BBC1). 'It's like, what? What? Eh-Eh, oo-oo-oo! You know: finding out about yourself and that, nothing more,' said Lennon, solving once and for all the vexed question of inarticulate trip-rapportage. But according to Ken Kesey, Captain America on board the famous Merry Pranksters' bus, acid was a 'century flower' whose pollen fell into the lives of people dissatisfied with post-war prosperity and, through the writings of Dylan, Lennon and Burroughs, 'opened up new ways of thinking, producing images that were latent in our consciousness but were not brought about by reading the *Woman's Home Journal*': a point of view which ignored the aberration of surrealism a decade or two before, but never mind.

A youthful, if such is possible, Roger Scruton thought that LSD was religious experience on the cheap, which it is, but better than none perhaps? Scruton is all for it being horribly expensive of course. A nine-year-old said more convincingly that acid was a much deeper experience than reading the bible six times, while a student priest who took part in a controlled acid test in a church to find out, on the cheap, whether God existed, spoke as follows while tripping: 'He came to me with his eyes and asked me to follow him. I had to go out and say to people, "There is a man on a cross,"' a statement which seemed to put the problem of most Christians — certainly Scruton — in a nutshell: a considerable achievement for an acid trip, which more usually puts the listener on the cross and the speaker in a nutshell. □

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WORK IN PROGRESS

Roar of the greasepaint

Naseem Khan

THE SEASON, folks, is upon us: the season of ingratiating delight, of ritzy splendour. No, it's not Christmas; it's the season of the annual theatre awards — one of which, the Olivier Awards, is on the box this Sunday.

Last month saw the Standard Awards; next month come the presentations for *Drama* (the voice of the British Theatre Association) plus *Plays and Players* and *City Limits* with their best buys of 1986. All in all, it's a long bout of what, for the converted, is thrilling glamour and, for the unconverted, sycophantic schmaltz.

This year Work in Progress spent a bemused few weeks tracking down the awards, from the sterile, black mass of the *Express* building (whence Michael Owen engineers the *Standard* Awards), via the glitz of Drury Lane, where scores of people I failed to recognise came away with Olivier nominations (the Oliviers get two bites at the public cherry), via chic Covent Garden, investigating the *Time Out* awards (notable for having no categories), to the equally chic Groucho Club to discuss the *Drama* awards. What does it all mean? Do the awards really have a point beyond a warm glow of self-congratulation? Lord Olivier once menaced a burglar with the 8lbs mass of his Society of West End Theatres statuette (SWET now gives the Oliviers), but are they more useful than that?

The mainstream award-givers predictably, to a man, felt there was great point to the exercise. It's 'to honour the enormous talent in the commercial West End theatre' (Nick Salmon, chairman of SWET); 'to bring theatre to greater public attention' (Owen of the Standards); 'to encourage and to give some sort of definition to the year's work' (Christopher Edwards, editor of *Drama*); 'a useful way of producing a record' (Peter Roberts, founder of the 23-year-old *Plays and Players* critics' awards). All these vague reasons might well be right but, on the face of it, the practical effect of the awards is not that great. SWET, for instance, recently estimated that four per cent of an audience went to a show because it had got an award.

Apparently, however, things are more complex. The week in which the Olivier list of possibles for 'West End Play of the Year' failed to include *I'm Not Rappaport*, said a spokesman for its management, saw business noticeably dipping. This suggests a finite pool of theatregoers moving where directed. Other people spoke of concrete gains: of the way in which an ailing *Buckley* had run another six months when given an award, of actors' careers made. However much people within the profession query the basis of the awards — and sniping is not unknown — they are still taken as benchmarks in an insecure world.

Meanwhile, at the award ceremonies themselves, all is peace and harmony. At Drury Lane large numbers of people shoehorn themselves into rather too small a space to watch (if they can squirm round the huddle of hacks) 60 people get certificates to say they've been nominated for one of the 15 Olivier Awards. The Standards do it with more style: first in the spooky vaults of the Guildhall, then in its wonderful Gothic-arched hall. But then the *Standard* has had 32 years to get it right — as distinct from the Oliviers' 12, *Drama*'s six and *Time Out*'s one.

One thing is certain: there will undoubtedly be overlap and duplication. Last year, for instance, Bill Bryden walked off with all four of the major, mainstream awards and Antony Sher and Gary Oldman between them divvied up all the Best Actors, including *City Limits*' readers-determined awards and *Time Out*'s new fringe awards. It is hardly surprising that, despite firm statements by the awarders ('Our emphasis is more to writing than to performance. It can be said maybe we go more for the living than the dead': Standards; 'Our awards are probably more commercial and more popular': Oliviers) and despite difference in categories, they are perceived as pretty interchangeable by the general public.

Each differs in its procedure. It's *Drama*'s editorial board (of which, to declare an interest, I am one) which decides on its winners. The Oliviers' 13 judges (six of them members of the general public) pick theirs by secret ballot. The Standards' 'small group of trendy people' — as a rival judge described them — have a civilised meal during which winners 'emerge'. *City Limits* leaves it to its readers.

The awards on the whole — even *Time Out*'s, a starting hiccup they acknowledge — don't startle. *Drama*, described by one of its staff as 'quirkier', includes an award for young people's theatre and, among its past Special Awards, has given prizes to Glasgow Citizens, the performance art Hesitate and Demonstrate and Graeae (a disabled theatre group). The Standards have included the Fringe — but venues like the Bush and Hampstead, not chancier places like the Albany Empire, Old Red Lion or Bridge Lane. The awards do not lead taste; they reward success.

If you want a true reflection of the struggles and breadth of theatre — from the 32-seater on the Isle of Mull to community plays with their casts of hundreds, from the millionth amateur *Sound of Music* to a portable *Macbeth* touring schools, from TiE to performance art on Brighton Beach — it is not to the awards you will look.

But could any one award cover the real waterfront? Clearly not. Such an exercise would merely transform a party game into an utter absurdity — comparisons being, as they are, odious. Better surely to accept these awards for what they are — theatre — and to look for the development of other awards (of which *Time Out*'s are a first sign) to challenge the overwhelming orthodoxy. □

Next week: Work in Progress looks for Performance Art pantomime.

CHILDREN'S THEATRE

Big oaks

Liz Wells

Is it drama? Is it education? At its best, theatre specifically devised for children is both

EACH CHILD PRESENT solemnly picked a tree seed out of a small box and promised to plant it for the sake of the future. We were in a marquee at the preview of a new schools touring show, *Green Deserts*, performed by Avon's Travelling Light Theatre Company. The play suggests a barren future wasteland in which people live below the earth in cell-like rooms communicating through television screens rather than human contact. Our heroine joins the radical underground, learns to 'skin-touch' with other humans and, eventually, takes a time-machine back 100 years, to 1986, to look for acorns. Oak trees grow from acorns. An acorn planted now will be an oak tree for the future. The subject is serious but the theatre-style is vivid, with music, songs, bright colours and props.

An imaginative approach to 'green' issues is typical of good Theatre-in-Education, which has always concerned itself with social problems: pollution in the early Seventies, for instance; questions of race and gender now. TiE characteristically has a strong moral core, a central politics. The message is direct and clear; the aim broadly educational.

Theatre-in-Education teams visit schools, offering shows designed for particular age groups. They usually include ex-teachers; also *at least* one schools liaison worker. Teacher resource packs are devised for preparatory and follow-up work in the schools visited. Other, more specific, initiatives may be involved. Travelling Light has linked up with the plant-a-tree scheme to organise for a new tree to be planted in each school playground after the performance and to draw attention to National Tree Week (29 November-7 December). They also aim to put individual schools in contact with schools in Kenya, where deforestation is a major issue.

As a method of capturing the imagination and inspiring interest, plays and workshops in schools are highly effective. Greenwich TiE, for example, uses a participatory approach involving simulation games or role-play. Greenwich also uses the Boal Technique, which involves a short piece of performance in which a particular dilemma is set up. Pupils are then invited to discuss and subsequently commit themselves to certain solutions, which will determine the outcome of the play. They then explore the solutions proposed, through taking roles and acting out the drama.

Recent research by Lynne Suffolk*, now leader of the Greenwich TiE team, points to the considerable long-term impact of Theatre-in-Education as an approach to *education for understanding*. Taking one case study, she set out to explore reactions to the work of Greenwich Young People's Theatre: 'In the main, pupils talked animatedly and in some detail about a

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programme they had experienced between one and four and a half years ago. In some cases recall of this "one-off" event was more vivid after four years than after a shorter time had elapsed.' Metaphorically, she argues that a TiE programme caused 'a pile of silver balls to go shooting into the pupil's mind, some fell into place immediately, but others continued to roll around.'

Theatre work with children comes in other forms: youth theatre is for those who want to participate in making and performing plays; children's theatre/young people's theatre involves plays for children performed by professional actors, usually on a touring circuit of theatres and/or community venues. What all areas of theatre for young people have in common is the low wages and high level of commitment associated with what has to be seen as one of the least glamorous and hardest working areas of work for actors.

The Standing Conference for Young People's Theatre operates as a liaison forum, publishing a journal, *New Voices in Young People's Theatre*, and organising training weekends for actors and other workers. SCYPT also meets annually for an intensive weekend of sharing experiences and discussing each others' plays and performances. One current SCYPT committee member describes its history as politically turbulent, but very productive in opening up debates about social issues and about ways in which they can be effectively addressed through theatre. He also stresses that a good story and passionate commitment are not enough: a play works through structure, characterisation and conflict. The principles of playwriting are fundamental to successful communication through theatre.

Companies may have differing types of contractual relationship with their writer(s), but, typically, the acting company is also involved in devising the script, working through improvisations to explore ideas and ways of using them dramatically. The end product is perhaps more direct than that to which adults are accustomed: indeed, workers in this area of theatre employ specific sets of theatrical skills and techniques.

Some years ago, in discussion with an LEA drama advisor, I was told that any extra funds would be spent on subsidising seats for schools parties at the local regional repertory theatre, rather than upon enouraging TiE. This means that children would be taken to the theatre to participate in a particular sort of social occasion which probably has little relevance to their lives — except in so far as plays turn up as Eng Lit school texts — and is consequently of little interest. TiE, by contrast, latches on to pertinent social issues and experiences and sets out to capture interest (in the early Seventies, teenagers in Exeter were so enthused by a play about river pollution that they got together a petition to MPs and local industry) yet remains underfunded, with many companies staffed at least in part through short-term MSC-type schemes. Yet *good* T-i-E work, as an inspirational approach to education, is highly effective. Try asking your children what they remember of the last play brought into their school. □

**Lynne Suffolk's research is published in* New Voices *no. 15.*

Books

UNDER FIVES

Baby teeth

Andrew Clements

This winter's batch of children's books is amok with unusual visitors: those for the very youngest being invaded by things that go bite in the night

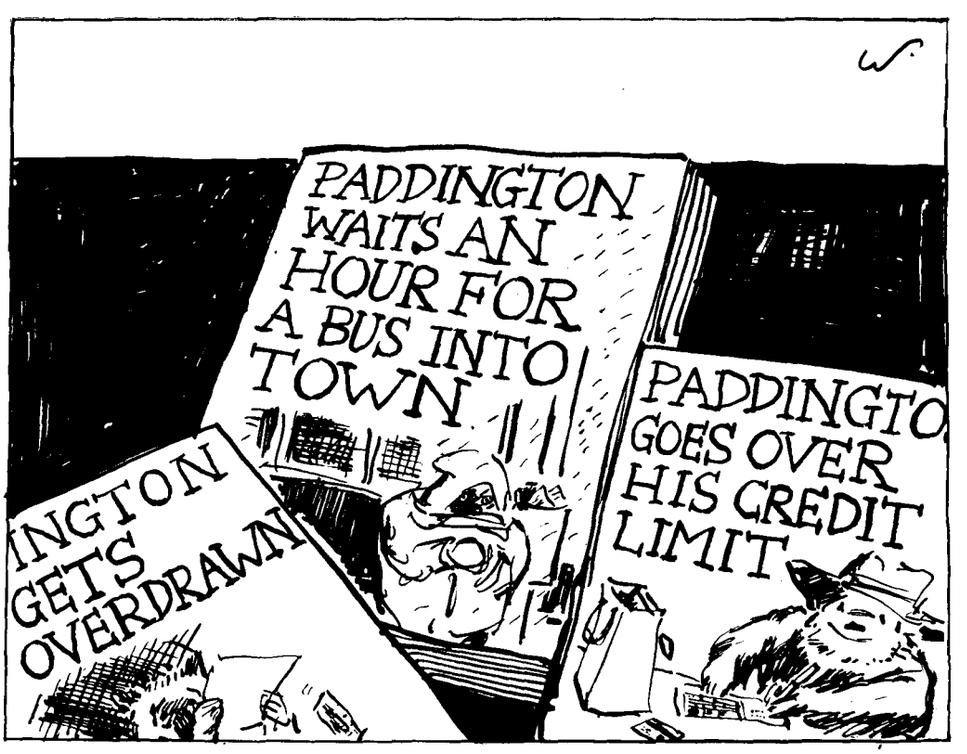
THE LATEST INTRUDER on the under-fives' regulation world of pop-up snowmen, peripatetic postmen, complacent cats and arty reworkings of well-worn fairy tales is a vampire. Hard on the heels of Ted Hughes' verse saga of Ffangs the Vampire (reviewed *NS* 12 September) comes Little Dracula, making his debut in **Little Dracula's First Bite** and **Little Dracula's Christmas** (Walker Books, £5.95 & £1.95 each) with texts by Martin Waddell and illustrations by Joseph Wright.

There's a whole new family at Castle Dracula obviously bursting to begin a fresh literary career: Big Dracula and Mrs, Baby Millicent, Igor, Batty and Little Dracula himself, whose attempted first bite lands him in the dentist's chair and whose pursuit of Santa Christmas works up a good appetite for Christmas dinner. The pictures are packed with witty detail, the stories vivid and economical; but what makes the two adventures so welcome is the arrival of a new character who isn't just a replica of one of the money-spinning formats in recent children's books.

An example of that kind of cloning at its most acceptable comes in Margaret Greaves and Jane Pinkney's **The Mice of Nibbling Village** (Deutsch, £5.95), firmly fixed in the line of cuddly mice from Beatrix Potter to Jill Barklem, but a sequence of poems rather than a narrative, portraits of the inhabitants of the village from Miss Seraphina Sprout the washermouse to Belinda Bookery the all-night swot, with the ghost of Old Possum lurking behind some of the verse. Gini Wade's **Curtis the Hip-Hop Cat** (Macmillan, £2.50) is a cool, unusually street-wise feline, whose rise to become the hippest cat in town is told in the Fat-Cat Rap. Whether children will appreciate the joke is another matter.

There's more verse in **Sir Cedric Rides Again** by Roy Gerrard (Gollancz, £5.95), a tale of crusading knights in which gentleness and cowardice triumph over gallantry; a victory for wimps everywhere. And there's not much grasp on the real world either in Astrid Lindgren's **The Dragon with Red Eyes** (Methuen, £5.95), but an elegant, touching tale that will appeal also to children of school age. **How Night Came** by Joanna Troughton (Blackie, £6.95) takes a legend from the Amazonian Tupi Indians and fashions it into a story that turns the standard creation myth on its head: here in the beginning there was perpetual day, and night was kept prisoner by the Great Snake who ruled the world below the waters, and not until night was allowed to escape were the creatures of the forest made.

Among the simplest books for the under-threes **Nicky's Noisy Night** and **Nicky's Picnic** by Harriet Ziefert, pictures by Richard Brown (Puffin, £2.95 each), neatly rework the trusted device of paper flaps to take an inquisitive kitten through the sounds and smells around him. Jane Miller's **Seasons on the Farm** (Dent, £4.50) distinguishes itself from any number of books of farms and farmyard animals by the quality and vividness of its photographs, moving through the seasons on



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the farm with the minimum of explanation and the maximum amount of visual stimulus. The emphasis is on strong pictorial imagery too in Altan's **Little White Elephant, My Friend Penguin** and **Round Red Dots** (Macdonald, £1.95 each) with their telegraphic texts and bright primary colours, though there are any number of books that take a child through the same territory.

Those who want more meat in a picture-book format will do little better in the current crop than the **Piggybook** by Anthony Browne (Julia Macrae, £5.95), whose tale of the defeat of the forces of male chauvinist piggery is told in marvellously obsessive paintings. The Piggott family treats Mrs Piggott as a drudge until she leaves them to fend for themselves in a house replete with porcine imagery. Things soon fall apart; the male Piggotts are reduced to rooting about for things to eat until mother returns on her own terms: the boys make their own beds, Mr Piggott does the ironing and washing up, while she mends the car. Splendid stuff. **Princess Smartypants** by Babette Cole (Hamish Hamilton, £5.95) carries its own feminist message as it shows Smartypants, the princess who enjoys being a Ms, resisting all her suitors and living happily ever after in solitary splendour, surrounded by her pet spiders and dragons.

In **Are We Nearly There?** (Bodley Head, £4.95) Louis Baum treats the subject of divorced parents with such touching delicacy that one wonders who will gain more from the book, children or parent, as a boy and his father make their way home from a day out together. It's beautifully understated, spoilt only by some rather routine graphics. **15 Ways to Go to Bed** (Macdonald, £4.95) uses verse again for a sequence of dissertations on getting to bed, staying up, having nightmares, pillow fights and being ill. It should appeal to a wide range. The concept of Helen Cresswell's **Whodunnit?** (Cape, £5.95) is good too — an Agatha Christie-like mystery transplanted to the animal world — but unfortunately it has brought along with it many of the detective novel's prejudices, creating a world of stereotyped villains (the rat, of course, did it) and dubious vigilantes, and is likely to implant a good many attitudes that no self-respecting *NS* reader would tolerate.

And two very different books with one thing in common: a total lack of text. **Angel's Alphabet** by Marie Angel (Pelham, £5.95) is one of the most ingenious and beautifully realised alphabets I've seen, crammed with exotic animals — numbat and olingo, vicuna and yapok — and a glossary slipped in at the end to spare anyone's zoological ignorance. **The Story of a Castle** by John S. Goodall (Deutsch, £5.95) takes the building from Norman beginnings to preservation for the public in the 1970s through a sequence of finely painted scenes. A painless history lesson. □

5-12 YEAR OLDS

By a whisker

Marsha Rowe

It's cats who guard the fictional worlds of slightly older children

I WONDER if the uninvited Christmas cat which has turned up in more than one book this year suspects that its seasonal appearance is more than coincidental — seeming, as it does, to back up the theory that our modern house pets are also totems, little gods that keep watch over the household soul, there to guard, to soothe, to receive unconscious messages.

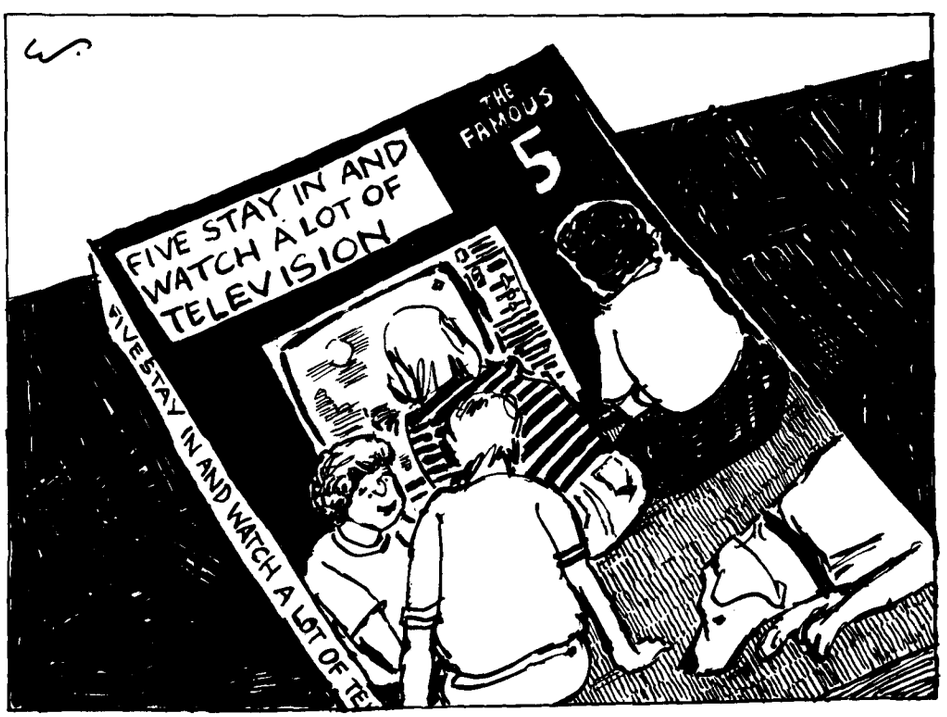
Catherine Stock's **Crumble, the Christmas Cat** (Macdonald, £2.95), who climbs so boldly in through a half-open window to adopt the family he finds there, also manages a satisfying revenge on the irritating visitor, cousin Bert, by tangling him in a 'mass of green feathers'. A fey little book for 5-6 year olds who are themselves, of course, fickle creatures. And James Herriot's — the vet's — **The Christmas Day Kitten** (Michael Joseph, £5.95) provides its houseowner with a kitten which will play ball — a 'retriever cat' — something her Basset hounds would never do. A more solemn, sentimental book, this one, either for reading aloud or for younger readers, with fulsome, documentary illustrations by Ruth Brown.

But perhaps the best part of the Christmas spirit — hope — is more appropriately served by another three books. On the make-love-not-war theme: the paperback version of Nanette Newman's **A Cat and Mouse Love Story**, with witty pictures by Michael Foreman (Piccolo, £1.95). And two newcomers. In **Caspar and the Secret Kingdom** (Beehive Books, £5.95) Miranda Seymour crackles, gushing and acidic, through a black cat's wonderful explorations . . . 'he had been climbing a stairway of living flesh . . .'. A book to appeal to 6-8 year olds on the look out for anything slightly more sophisticated and imaginative, illustrated in delicately tinted, icicle detail by Lois Allard. For humour there is John Talbot's **Sniff Sniff** (A &Black, £5.95), the story of a mouse pounced on by a keen little girl, told in captions to Fifties comic book-style pictures. The mouse has messy adventures in the fridge, gets a good scrub down from the girl, who gets a good telling off from mum. 'Just like you,' said my daughter, laughing until, turning the page, she saw the mouse's scrunched up expression as it received the girl's ministrations. A cool cat, this author.

Also recommended for fine humour that turns the other cheek, Oscar Wilde's classy classic **The Canterville Ghost** (dist. Picture Book Studio, £6.95) fresh from the USA with new, very stylish water colours by Lizbeth Zwerger. Enjoyable for its laying to rest of a fusty English ghost by the spirited American visitors who, all in good faith, offer the old haunter 'Tammany Rising Sun Lubricator' for his clanking chains, although it is the mysterious bravery of daughter Virginia that finally does the trick.

Two other books from across the sea, both on the theme of emigration. Madeline Rose's **Witch over the Water** (Angus & Robertson, £1.95) for young readers, in which amusing and ruthless grannie finds her own means of transport to follow her family out to Australia, only because of the rejuvenating herbs she will find there. And, for history and for reading aloud, I like the simplicity and truth of **Watch the Stars Come Out** by Riki Levinson (Orchard Books, £6.95), with its spare style fleshed out by the calming illustrations of Diane Goode, a first-person account of how grandma's mama sailed to America from Europe as a little girl accompanied only by her ten-year-old brother on a crowded, immigrant boat.

Among the picture books rated for older children, a lavish present would be the hologram book **The Mirrorstone**, a collaboration by Michael Palin, Alan Lee, Richard Seymour (Cape, £7.95). The story of a modern boy who, after recognising damp, bedraggled versions of himself in TV sets and bathroom mirrors, falls predictably right through one (a hologram) to discover a maudlin, mediaeval setting where he is set to task by a wizard to search for the mirrorstone, the true reflector. For a little bit of real magic for a stocking, Chris Van Allsburg's



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The Wreck of the Zephyr (Picture Puffin, £1.75) is worth looking out for, guaranteed to put the wonder back in the most cynical eyes.

If the child will not turn up her/his nose at 'fairy tales', then the best, most gruesome, meddlesome, wicked ones for winter afternoons are to be found in the latest collection that Alan Garner has gathered from English and Welsh folklore in **A Bag of Moonshine** (Collins, £8.95), garnished too with truly nasty pictures by Patrick James Lynch, for 6 years right up to 12. But if such a book is bound to fail, try these three, for flair and fun. **The Type One Super Robot** by Alison Prince (Marilyn Malin, £5.95), is a comedy bounding with the tribulations of young Humbert and a helpful robot's stay with undomestic Uncle Bellamy. Or there is the mischievous Josh, whose false animal footprints bring out the naturalist investigators, TV cameras and all, in **Josh's Panther** by Fay Sampson (illustrated by Jill Bennett, Gollancz, £5.95). A respectable book with a bit of sibling rivalry thrown in. Whereas Roger McGough's **The Stowaways** (Kestrel Kites, £3.95) is disarmingly disreputable, with ghastly puns and thrown-away one-liners and casual cartoons by Tony Blundell. Dependably funny.

For thrills and spills there is Zena Carus' **Run Cassie Run**, an adventure for 10-12-year-olds (Blackie, £6.50). Despite its misleading cover it's not anti-punk, although it does slot 'rioters' as 'baddies'. The fact that it carries some conventional moral sense is in its favour. Among the cluster of books brought out by Adlib Paperbacks, aimed at 14 years plus, but no doubt available for any precocious 12-year-old, is Elizabeth Mace's **Beware the Edge** (£3.95) an amoral fiction of superstition in which the weak-of-will are victims ready and ripe for, if not deserving of, death. □

YOUNG ADULTS

Giants and ogres

Adèle Geras

First they invaded the cinema screen; now fathers are striding across the pages of young adult novels

THERE WAS A TIME when parents, particularly fathers, were banished from children's books altogether: sent on ornithological field trips, conferences, up the Amazon — anything, really, to get them out of the way so that the adventurers could get started. In this season's batch, however, fathers are important in all sorts of ways.

Sometimes it is their *physical* absence which is the mainspring of the story; their spirit pervades the narrative. In Joan Lingard's **The Freedom Machine** (Hamish Hamilton, £6.50) Mungo's Dad is in gaol for embezzlement. Mungo, a very grown-up ten-year-old, rather than stay with vinegary Aunt Janet during his mother's sojourn in hospital, takes to the high road on Gulliver, his bicycle, which was a present from his father. Through Mungo's first-person narrative we come to know his Dad very well, and to understand the endearing fecklessness that has led him to prison. It's an absorbing and entertaining book.

Freshman English, USA, 1970

Gareth Reeves

Someone talks about that dark spot
on the other side of the globe.
'Could you repeat that?' Or rather, don't.

We wrestle with clauses.
They put all their cards on the table,
even if they are blank.

When it comes to politics
I hold mine close to my chest.
Irony isn't their strong point:

several frown at 'A Modest Proposal';
I try to explain, but we find ourselves
falling back on attitudes.

One day the class suddenly shrinks.
Some of the boys are missing.
Silence. I feel hurt.

Someone blurts out 'Depression maybe:
yesterday their numbers were picked;
they could get the call-up.'

I can't think of anything to say.
We bend to our grammar. In the high
bunker-like windows feet are passing.

A really wonderful father is to be found in **Rachel** (Angus and Robertson, £6.95) by Ivan Southall. Rachel herself is a spunky, lively, imaginative heroine, just the daughter for Frank, the gold miner. The pleasure he takes in his children, his love and devotion shine out of the book like a lantern down a mineshaft. The voice telling the story is enchanting. You can't help but be spellbound and completely transported to the Australian goldfields at the turn of the century. There are escapes from death, rescues, discoveries and the stirrings of first love, but it's the characters that make the book enjoyable. Not only Rachel's father but also her siblings and friends and the marvellous Aunt Lizzie fly off the page and take up residence in the imagination. When Ivan Southall describes pea soup, you can practically dip your spoon into the page and take a sip.

Janni Howker is another writer from the spell of whose voice you cannot move until the tale is told. Her first two books deservedly won a brace of prizes, and that that was only the beginning is made clear by her latest novella. **Isaac Campion** (Julia Macrae, £5.95) is very short. An old man looks back at a time when, after the death of a beloved brother, he began to work for his father, a horse dealer whom he fears and hates and loves. Isaac is, he knows, unable to take his dead brother's place in his father's esteem. He is not fond of the work either, but, as he says: 'There were magistrates and assizes and the poisonous smoke that belched out of Phoenix foundry. Me father's hand was hard. It could come whistling out of nowhere, but he stood between that world and me.' The story turns on a boatload of horses coming over from Ireland which may or may not reach Isaac's father, and this endangered cargo also has a metaphorical and symbolic weight in the book. Janni Howker draws us into her world with a style of biblical simplicity and strength, and by not being afraid of strong feelings. Samuel Campion, the Godless horse-dealer of Oven House Road, and Frank Lefevre, the smiling Australian gold miner, tower over the other fathers like giants.

An altogether more restrained book is **The Moonlight Man** by Paula Fox (Dent, £7.95). It's beautifully written, but fails to stir the emotions, even though it's about a teenage girl trying to understand the causes of her father's alcoholism. They spend a holiday together, he gets drunk a couple of times, she has elliptical conversations with him and learns about the reasons for her parents' divorce. She's wiser by the end of it, but both father and daughter remain shadowy.

Another shadowy figure is the incestuous father in **A Girl Like Abby** by Hadley Irwin (Viking/Kestrel, £4.50). Incest is a difficult subject and in this book it's dealt with in an unsensational and direct way. The book is engagingly written in the chatty American style familiar to Judy Blume's readers. For the first 80 pages or so, it seems like just another love story. If Chip, the narrator, and his mother are a little too good to be true, that's a minor quibble about a book that many young people would enjoy and learn something from.

Now, as they say, for something completely different: Christmas. In the words of Charles Dickens in **A Christmas Tree** (Michael O'Mara, £5.95), describing presents on the trees of his childhood: 'How thick the books begin to hang!' This is a delightful essay, beautifully produced, and just the thing for Dickensian-yuletide buffs of any age. Also published by Michael O'Mara Books, in a handsome edition with a fragrant, leather-bound spine and an attached red silk book mark, is **Black Beauty** by Anna Sewell, still the best horsey book of all, and only £8.95.

Finally, what pre-Christmas book review would be complete without stocking fillers? Here are two, costing £1.95 each. Gene Kemp's supernatural tale **Mr Magus Is Waiting For You** has just been on television. Faber publishes the book and anyone who buys it now can get the benefit of Alan Baker's splendid illustrations before the TV pictures are seen again in 1987. This book is for younger readers, but teenagers would enjoy the robust mixture of prose and poetry by some very distinguished Scottish writers in **The Other Side of the Clyde** (Puffin Plus), edited by David Drever and Liam Stewart. □

FICTION

Autopsy

Wendy Brandmark

The Injured Party
SUSAN FROMBERG SCHAEFFER *Hamish Hamilton*
£10.95

IN HER LATEST novel, which concerns a writer suffering a breakdown, Susan Fromberg Schaeffer makes us witnesses to a 300-page therapy session. Like good analysts we must observe detail, image, the small changes, the

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patterns which emerge from the past, but we must not become too intimate with the patient.

Iris, the successful novelist for whom every word is a sign, every event an opportunity for verbal embellishment, has lost her desire to speak. After returning from hospital cured of a mysterious fever, she turns her back on her family and takes to her bed. Iris identifies with the amnesiacs who cannot begin afresh 'because of fear that their life could once again be erased'. She did not think she would leave the hospital alive. Her reprieve from death robbed her of the ability to live. After three weeks of this silence, her husband loses patience with a wife who is 'a stone, a drift of snow': he needs a wild card to win her back and it comes in the shape of her old boyfriend John who returns like a vision to Iris after 20 years, because he is dying.

At the novel's heart lies a confrontation with mortality, a desperate search back in time for some evidence of eternity. Iris is obsessed with the past: her study is filled with relics, her books with family skeletons and old lovers. Her fever began after a novel she had written about her grandfather received an unfavourable review: 'She had not brought her grandfather back from the dead . . . she had held him up to ridicule, disgrace, criticism worse than anything he had ever known in life.' Just as she misused, misunderstood her grandfather's history, she distorted her past with John. 'All writers try to stop time', she believes, but to do so they must rob from the dead and the living, and it is with this theft that her angst begins.

Schaeffer wisely roots this extraordinary mental journey in the everyday. From her bed Iris listens to the children fighting, the housekeeper arriving, the washing machine spinning, and contrasts this normal round of activity with her rarefied existence, her paralysis. The few events of the novel — a rock concert, a trip to Vermont, John's sudden decline — and Schaeffer's witticisms, relieve only temporarily the tension of a consuming search for meaning. Nothing can be said, thought, can happen, without lengthy comment or reflection. This makes for a slow moving narrative, often one which does not move at all, at least not linearly.

Susan Fromberg Schaeffer's early novel *Anya* about a Polish Jewish woman during World War II was a painful book to read because it involved us in the minutiae of her daily life in the ghettos and concentration camps of Eastern Europe. Her later novels, *Memoirs of a Seduced Woman* and *Mainland*, though not as devastating, were compelling accounts of women in turmoil. But Schaeffer's ability to pull us into the complex emotional lives of her characters is not apparent in *The Injured Party*. We are too conscious of the writer watching her characters watch themselves to get involved. *The Injured Party* is not so much a novel as an exquisitely written testimony, a critical analysis of a breakdown. □

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DECADENCE

Frogs porn

Paul Hallam

The Sins of the Fathers: Decadence in France 1870-1914
JENNIFER BIRKETT *Quartet* £14.95

OCTOPUSES and frogs figure large in the fears and fantasies of French decadents. A tentacle or a croak and behold: Woman in one of her many guises. Sucking and strangling or pinned, legs thrashing, beneath the weight of the male Artist Hero. My sympathies are firmly with the frog, solidarity with the octopus.

This is an interesting book on an unpleasant bunch of writers. In the course of her argument Birkett helpfully summarises the plots of dozens of novels, quoting and translating substantial chunks. On her evidence, most of them are badly written tripe. She rightly calls decadence a 'vampire' culture, feeding on pagan legend, the mediaeval, Greek myth, the occult and Catholicism. Anywhere there might be a good setting for an orgy. What she says of Huysmans' *Against Nature*, that it was 'written to hold life at a pleasurable distance', to savour and immobilise it, is broadly true of the rest. It's a regressive literature, a literature of avoidance.

What is surprising is Birkett's evident relish for some of these writers. She praises the 'erotic quality' of Remy de Gourmont's language, its vivacity, authority and precision 'recalling the mystical sensuality of the troubadours'. Unfair, perhaps, to quote a sentence, but this is not untypical: 'The cutting stones would have lashed through the ribbons of her bodice where the fine, slender waist dwindled to a spindle-point.' Later a heroine is 'twined like an octopus . . . suckers pressing forward, to take my life.'

The bourgeoisie, the Jewish and the Yankee businessman, the crowd are all attacked. Women are Salomes or Medusas, hated mothers, the creation of the Artist or the Devil. Birkett tries to differentiate between her authors but, though ideas varied, their prose styles are virtually indistinguishable. They also share a masochism, an arrogance, a fear of sex and a terrible sourness. Ultimately Huysmans' 'everything is Siphylis' might serve as a motto for them all.

Péladan was obsessed with Wagner, androgyny and the renunciation of sex, and spread his obsessions through tedious sounding 14-volume sagas. Marguerite Rachilde proves more interesting — though Birkett questions her reclamation by feminists. She shared the men's conservatism: 'I have always acted as an individual, never dreaming of founding a new society or upsetting the one that existed.' But at least there's a hint of earthiness. One of her heroines falls for a chunky young painter's smell of fried potatoes, enjoys the warmth and foul language of butchers' apprentices. But one of her heroes is responsible for the worst frog attack in the book: 'Kneeling before the heap of tiny corpses he undresses them, removes the double ring of their golden eyes, lifts off their pretty green satin dresses, their sweet white velvet pants. It all slides off in a heap like dolls' clothes.' Rachilde may display an aristocratic contempt but she is less self and soul obsessed than her male contemporaries. She and her heroines play for their own amusement.

Lorrain might sometimes send up decadence. His Madame Beringhel fills her salon with chinoiserie, diablerie and frogs. She delights in the 'seething, crawling, hopping assembly of flabby bellies, thin thighs and watery backs': in her Rops engraving, frogs represent the Queen of Sheba, Herodias, and Lesbos. But Lorrain is serious when he writes there are 'no mountains, forests, dawns rising over glaciers, nor twilight falling on pools for the man who does not both long and fear to see Oriane rising from the edge of the wood, Thiphaine in among the golden broom, and Melusine at the fountain's edge'. You might be advised to stay away from Nature anyway. In another tale a princess and collector of frog statuary is attacked by turkeys, sniffed by foxes, caressed by a rat's tail and whipped by vipers. Fairy stories for bored and frightened men.

Mirbeau promises somthing new, welcoming 'anarchism, socialism, feminism, anti-Semitism, all the harbingers of inevitable revolution.' All, including anti-Semitism, can bring violence and change, never mind if the Jews are scapegoats. For all his posture of concern for the damage done to children's souls (paste thrown to dogs in one story), Mirbeau is basically a porn writer like the rest. Women must pay for the damage done to men by patriarchy, they will be raped and he revels in the horrors.

Glib associations of sex and death, stale imagery, lists of jewels, body parts, perfumes, exoticism, visions of hell, orgies and artistic angst. The decadents enjoyed a brief revival in the Sixties, why rake them up again? There is still decadent consumerism; the appropriation of other cultures for fashion and style continues and spreads. But decadence isn't what it used to be. Thankfully camp and irony have developed, if not to destroy it then at least to undermine some of its seriousness. □

POLITICS

Capital account

Angus Calder

The Meaning of the Second World War
ERNEST MANDEL *Verso* £22.95 & £6.95

COINCIDENTALLY, I've been reading Randall Stevenson's recent introduction to *The British Novel Since the 1930s* (Batsford) alongside this new book by Mandel. Stevenson suggests that though little important fiction has directly and memorably confronted the horrors of the Second World War — Evelyn Waugh's projection of defeat in Crete, while powerful, hardly resonates like *Catch 22* — it nevertheless dominated novelists in the Forties and Fifties as they turned to explore memories of childhood, lost Edens. British response to the period since has typically been regressive in this way. We have

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sentimentalised the crisis of 1940 and shaken our heads nostalgically over the purported pathos of the last days of the Raj. Very few of us have taken seriously the Leninist argument which the CPGB put forward in 1939-41, and abandoned when Hitler invaded the Soviet Union, that the war was essentially imperialist.

Ernest Mandel, a Belgian well known here for many years as a powerful exponent of Marxist theory from a sophisticated Trotskyist position, has no doubt that indeed it was. 'The motor' of the war 'was the major capitalist states' need to dominate the economy of whole continents through capital investment, preferential trade agreements, currency regulations and political hegemony'. While Britain's posture had to be defensive ('What we have we hold,' said Churchill — though we didn't), Japan, Germany and the USA seem to Mandel to have had unlimited war aims. The 'real stake' was 'the establishment of the world hegemony of one imperialist power'. Counter-revolution was a necessary preliminary — the repression of labour and the destruction of the Soviet republic — and the war can be seen as the 'culmination' of this process.

'Anti-fascism', the professed ideology of Britain and her allies in the 'minor European imperialist countries' masked the exploitation and oppression by the same powers of many millions in other continents, but was a useful propaganda device for rallying wage labour to the cause of resisting Germany. In the USA straightforward nationalism was sufficient. Use of the A-Bomb against already-defeated Japan was a 'political show of strength' directed at US allies, especially the Soviet Union. With its implicit racist contempt for Oriental humanity, it was a gesture in the imperialist tradition of genocidal *conquistadores* and slave traders. As was the Holocaust, which was supposed to serve German imperialism's 'manifest destiny' to colonise Eastern Europe. It was 'something of a racist compliment' to the Jews that Nazis could not imagine them as obedient slaves working under Germans in newly conquered *Lebensraum*. Meanwhile, the British flight from Burma was marked by nauseating discrimination against Indian fellow-refugees.

The working class rallied towards the end of the war. The heroism shown by left-wingers in resistance movements was followed by revolutions in Yugoslavia and China and an upsurge of labour in Europe in 1944-8, of which Mr Attlee's landslide can be seen as part. Working-class militancy worldwide was sufficient to restrain the Pentagon from pressing on to world conquest through 'hot war' against the USSR, and the 'saving' of China from Communism was postponed in favour of consolidating capitalism in Western Europe and Japan. But the ceaseless series of imperialist local wars against movements for national liberation — Vietnam, Nicaragua, etc. — shows that the expansionist dynamic of imperialism still drives relentlessly towards the destruction of the human race.

Joseph Schumpeter argued as late as 1943 that the roots of imperialism were essentially pre-capitalist and semi-feudal, pointing out that the USA, the strongest capitalist country, had no great military establishment. While Mandel praises Schumpeter's *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy* as 'one of the few bourgeois historical studies of the last fifty years worth mentioning', he insists that the militarisation of the US during and since the war proves him wrong.

ALTHOUGH HE ESCAPED INTO THE DARKNESS THE COPS HAD NO TROUBLE TRACKING HIM DOWN AND CHARGING HIM WITH 'ARSON AND INTENT TO ENDANGER LIFE'. THE YOUNG ANARCHIST POET SPENT THE NEXT FOUR MONTHS IN A SOLITARY CELL WAITING TO GO FOR TRIAL.

These Cliff Harper illustrations come from a cartoon-strip tribute to Jim Heather-Hayes, the young anarchist poet who committed suicide in Ashford prison after serving four months in solitary confinement for fire-bombing a London police station in 1982. Harper's tribute is included in FREEDOM: A HUNDRED YEARS (Freedom Press, £2) an 88-page, large-format collection of 'essays on a century of revolutionary propaganda and anarchism today' published to celebrate the centenary of the anarchist magazine *Freedom*. Long-standing contributors recall some of the many police raids and trials that *Freedom* has survived, and there's an invaluable series of short biographical studies of the remarkable men and women involved with the magazine: Charlotte Wilson, Alfred Marsh, Lilian Wolfe, Max Nattlau and Marie Louise Berneri. There are also poems from Dennis Gould and Crass; illustrations by Fabio Santin, Cam and Donald Rooum; a survey of artists associated with British anarchism; and contemporary essays by Alex Comfort, Colin Ward, Barbara Smoker and others, plus a facsimile reproduction of the first issue, published in 1886. (Martyn Everett)

Mandel has studied widely and astutely in works of 'bourgeois' historiography. The compression of his account of the war does not make for easy reading, but he constantly stimulates ideas (mostly very unpleasant ones). The force and intelligence of his argument cannot be evaded, and to quibble over details may seem trivial when a rigorous thinker, in deep earnest, has measured up to the vileness of the worst decade in history and produced a largely plausible overview.

But, quite often in this book, dubious detail indicates weaknesses in his argument. I would not challenge (who could?) his assertion that the USA is an imperialist power. But to equate 'the stranglehold imposed by the CIO bureaucracy upon the rising militancy of the American working class' with Chiang Kai Shek's 1927 massacre of Chinese Communists, the rise of Nazism and Franco's victory, all as instances of pre-war 'counter-revolution', is to beg questions. Can the New Deal in the US possibly be seen as intensifying repression and exploitation? Later Mandel argues that Soviet success in raising arms production despite the Nazis' capture of four tenths of the country's industrial resources demonstrates 'the economic and social superiority of a planned economy'. But what about the production triumphs of US shipbuilding 'where industrialists like Henry Kaiser have adopted Fordist mass production methods'? As Mandel points out elsewhere, the war everywhere, not just in Moscow, was 'one of administrators and planners . . . a conveyor belt war'.

Was it not the case that the US and Soviet Union, as militarised superpowers, became in certain respects more like each other than either is to other countries? And does this not in turn imply that Schumpeter's case still needs pondering? Is the perverted rationality of capitalism really sufficient explanation for two world wars? Surely atavism was at work in the gassing of Jews? Churchill in 1940 fought on though the interests of his beloved empire would have been better served, at least in the short run, by truce with Germany. Mandel himself is scornful of the German bourgeoisie's failure to see that they should capitulate in 1944, which led to their loss of 'half their state through pride'. But then 'pride' as a factor in human affairs long antedates capitalism, or even class.

Angus Calder's The People's War *has just been reissued in hardback by Cape and is available in paperback from Panther.*

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War games

Don Matheson, Warrington, Cheshire
I'm not sure if Mervyn Jones (Letters 21 Nov.) is for or against nuclear weapons, but he does seem to have accepted some of the myths of the pro-bomb lobby.

Re-write his third paragraph to read 'The sensible . . . can see that the nuclear bomb is the *non*-weapon of modern war, and to contemplate *fighting* with it is the equivalent of hara-kiri' and you have exposed one of them. Present NATO policy is to threaten nuclear response against conventional attack. But since escalation could not be contained, both sides know this threat is empty. If Mervyn Jones doubts this, will he say at what point he thinks NATO could 'go nuclear', and what would happen if they did? Does he really think they would blow up the world in response to a tank attack?

The second myth — repeated ad nauseam by Lord Carrington and the Tory front bench — is that we can't match Warsaw Pact conventional forces. Well, it all depends how you count. But include the French, and even without allowing for the dubious value to the Soviets of their vassal armies, or the superior quality of NATO equipment, there is no great disparity. Certainly nowhere remotely near the 3 to 1 advantage said to be necessary for anyone contemplating an attack.

None of this has any bearing on the main item of Labour's policy — the removal of Britain's 'independent' nuclear capability. Goodness knows *what* it's for, but it certainly has nothing to do with tanks on the German plains. I think CND should sponsor a competition with a really big prize for the first person to come up with a credible scenario in which Britain used its super 'deterrent' (a)independently, and (b)to her advantage. I doubt if they would ever have to pay out.

Struggling with the radicchio

Gill Kirkup, Milton Keynes
I sympathise with Dermod Quirke's comments (Letters 14 Nov.) about the nature of your food page. I find it the most extraordinary inclusion in the magazine. There is a politics of food, and the politics of the present food page would sit comfortably in *Vogue*. It certainly doesn't belong in my life. I couldn't afford the ingredients even if I knew what they were, and radicchio (*NS* 24 Oct.) defeated me. It wasn't in my *Cooks Encylopaedia* — neither the radicchio from Choggia nor the one from Castelfranco. I couldn't afford the time to prepare and cook the stuff. I'm a struggling professional woman with two small children, and I suspect not untypical of your readers.

I suppose I don't feel quite so harshly about Colin Spencer as I do about Anna Del Conte. He does try to excuse his salmon dish by suggesting that it's a celebratory dish for Christmas, but he goes in for apologising for being a food writer and not very convincingly. He began his October review of food books by suggesting that he was going to tell us about some 'probing' books on food 'dedicated to making the public more aware'. He then reviewed a book containing recipes for Romanian soup stews, useful he tells us if we have a glut of seedy lettuce. Sorry, Colin, there's no time for lettuce growing in our house. He followed this by a book on Elizabethan cookery. Not quite the probing I was expecting.

New light on Stalin's purges

Martin Walker, Gruzinsky Pereulok, Moscow
I am most grateful for Professor Alec Nove's kind words about my book *The Waking Giant* (*NS* 28 Nov.) and appreciate his pointing out my lack of reference in the footnotes for the precise figure of 18,840,000 arrests I gave for the purge victims of the 1930s. The reference is from *The Times of Stalin*, by Anton Antonov-Ovseyenko, Harper and Row, New York 1981, Appendix 2.

Antonov-Ovseyenko's father was the man who led the charge on the Winter Palace in 1917, was ambassador in Spain in the 1930s, and was summoned back to Moscow to be purged by Stalin. His son has spent years trying to win full rehabilitation for his father's memory. His book, based on years of research in the Soviet Union with the discreet assistance of many officials, is a powerful personal statement and an important source for the period.

His figures for the purges come from the records of the Lubyanka prison, at which the central registry of the purge arrests was kept, and which was made available to the secret party commission of enquiry which the Central Committee established in 1954. He claims to have read the commission's secret report, which seems plausible given his contacts and the wealth of detail available in his book. Although I cite his book elsewhere in my text and footnotes, through an oversight on my part I did not give chapter and verse in this instance. This will be corrected in subsequent editions.

It speaks volumes for the great distance that the process of Soviet reform still has to go, that my own copy of Antonov-Ovseyenko's book is now on loan to a current member of the Central Committee of the CPSU who can obtain it in no other way, in spite of his official position.

Workers' rights and black struggles

Geoff Cocks, London NW2
While acknowledging the *issue* of the contradictions thrown up by the Socialist Local State in a capitalist society, Leslie Moody (Letters 21 Nov.), in attacking Diane Abbott, firmly locks himself into a backwoods workerist position which refuses to accept 'race' as a legitimate construct for analysis. Moreover, such a position consistently relegates the daily-lived reality of the effects of racism to some marginalised post-socialist revolution agenda. I'm white, but my understanding is that most black people aren't prepared to wait for that particular millennium.

At least three of Mr Moody's assumptions are indeed problematic: (1) the extent to which local authority white collar 'unionism' can be equated with industrial trade unionism; (2) in what sense can Ms McGoldrick be defined as a *worker* locked in struggle with her inflexible employers and (3) ought disputes centred around racism to be seen as of greater import than those usually giving rise to grievance, disciplinary action and so on?

By blindly leaping to the defence of a 'worker' accused of making a racist remark (gross misconduct), Mr Moody and 'many of us in the Labour Party and trade union movement' have in fact lined up with those forces he rightly identifies as systematically undermining the rights of workers in general.

Yet again, I would imagine most black people being hardly surprised to find when it comes to the crunch — racism actually being taken seriously and tackled — that the white establishment, including the Labour Party and trade union leaders, simply close ranks and use all the power at their disposal to suppress their (black) struggle.

Speaking our mind — independently

John Torode, Policy Editor & Chief Leader Writer, the Independent
Martin Kettle (a *Guardian* leader writer) concludes (*NS* 21 Nov.) that 'the general political line of the *Independent* is a right wing Toryism that dares not speak its name'.

That week, *inter alia*, our leading articles called for an end to the 'nonsensical' Wright case and suggested that Sir Robert Armstrong might care to resign; said it was time to 'talk about talks' with Alfonsin and suggested sovereignty must be, eventually, negotiable; continued our campaign for penal reform; said that Kenneth Baker should not veto the teachers' pay deal; confirmed our opposition to capital punishment; called for a stronger and more interventionist Commonwealth, wedded to democratic ideals; suggested that Reagan should 'purge' the NSC, starting with John Poindexter.

Our leading article on the royal visit to China (the one Kettle chides us for not publishing) appeared on 18 October. It was written by one of our specialists and very good it was too.

Memorial meeting for Jeanette Mitchell

Maureen Mackintosh, London SW4
Friends of Jeanette Mitchell, who died of cancer in October, are organising a meeting to celebrate her life and work. Jeanette had a great influence, personally and through her work, on a very wide range of people. Over the past 15 years she was involved in the politics of health, from the NHS, through occupational health on the London buses, to holistic health care; she played an influential role in feminism, in 'Beyond the Fragments', and in the politics of community development and the local state. Jeanette confronted many personal and political contradictions, and was a creative influence on all who knew her. The meeting will be held at Friends House, Euston Road, London NW1 at 7pm, Monday 8 December; all who knew her are welcome.

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As two senior officers will retire in the Autumn of 1987, we require to appoint two Assistant General Secretaries to work in tandem with them to achieve an orderly transition. The posts will be located in the **Head Office.**

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For application form and job description please write to: **John James, Assistant Secretary (Organisation), BIFU, 55 Charles Street, Cardiff CF1 4ED.** All application forms to be completed and returned not later than:

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The campaign will put strong emphasis on local and regional activities, not only by NALGO itself but also with the TUC and other organisations. It will be aimed at the public at large as well as towards NALGO members and other trade unionists.

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Application forms and further details from: **the Personnel Officer, National & Local Government Officers' Association, 1 Mabledon Place, London WC1H 9AJ.**

Completed application forms must be received no later than: **31 December 1986.**

Applicants will be considered on the basis of their suitability for the post *regardless of sex, race, marital status, sexual orientation or disablement.*

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Two Year Contract

Scale SO1/2 £10,569/£12,297

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Participating authorities have set up a Management Committee for the Study which wishes to appoint a Study Co-ordinator who will be responsible to the Management Committee for the Co-ordination, phasing and completion of the study over the period of its two year duration.

You will be familiar with the debate about Civil Defence planning in a nuclear weapons state; have a basic scientific knowledge and some experience of local government; be able to process large amounts of information and write clearly and concisely; and have some computer experience.

You should be aware that the majority of participating authorities are declared as NUCLEAR FREE ZONES.

The post will be located in the offices of one of the participating North Western Local Authorities.

Application form and job description from the Staff Office, Town Clerk's Department, P.O. Box 532, Town Hall, Manchester, M60 2LA. Telephone 061 234 3077. Closing date 19th December

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The person appointed will edit a bulletin for Council Members and senior officers, maintain a Members' Library and Information Service, organise and co-ordinate training courses for Councillors, as required. The appointees will work closely with Councillors and should be familiar with their work and needs.

TWO VOLUNTARY SECTOR CO-ORDINATORS
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1 Full-time (35 hours) Ref: PP6
1 Part-time (17½ hours—job share) Ref: PP7

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For further information and an application form please telephone 01-881 6065 (24 hour answering service) quoting the appropriate reference.

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Applications are particularly invited from women, members of black and minority ethnic communities and people with disabilities as they are under-represented in the service. Appointments will be made regardless of candidates' marital status or sexual orientation.

CLOSING DATE: 19 December 1986

Haringey

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MON 8 DEC

BENEATH THE WHITE COAT. A seminar series on Science & Politics in the 1980s organised by the British Society for the Social Responsibility in Science. The Marquis of Granby, Chandos Place, WC2. This week: Gail Vines & Linda Birke 'Test Tube Women — the Politics of Reproductive Technologies'.

WED 10 DEC

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BACKCHAT

FIRST PERSON

Family planning

Janet Hadley

EACH YEAR, as September becomes October, the first niggle of tension begins. As the days get shorter we try not to think about the question that, sooner or later, we know is going to face us. Every time someone answers the phone, it looms back into focus: will this be the call? the one we've been waiting for?

'Hello, what are you doing for Christmas?' Specifically, whoever it is means 12 hours on 25 December. And, when the question comes, airily but with deadly precision, there's usually only one possible tactic: you've got to stall for time. An exacting game of bluff and double bluff is going on beneath the surface.

As the weeks of autumn pass, brothers and sisters try to guess which of them will take on which sets of parents and parents-in-law. You have to work out whether it is better to make the first move or to lie low until other people's tactics become discernible. Couples negotiate tensely. (Last year we had your mother, so this year we ought really to have my parents. We could try and get out of it, but if my sister goes to her husband's parents and that's far from certain when you think what happened *last* year . . . then my mum and dad'll expect us to ask them, won't they?)

A computer would help, because what happened last year and in the last five years is all-important in calculating where duty lies. If there are divorces and remarriages the problems multiply horribly. Unmarried adults can sometimes get away with going to friends — though they risk being seen as overgrown adolescents — but for adults with young children the Christmas game is played in deadly earnest.

Don't get me wrong, I look forward to Christmas, especially to the rituals of cooking and hospitality. I love making the puddings and the mince pies and decorating the tree. I enjoy planning the presents and the food. I just wish it didn't all have to be so much a question of 'who are we going to have to offend this year?', for there always seems to be someone. The simple enquiry about your whereabouts and the company you'll be keeping on 25 December oozes with sour layers of family history.

If you refuse to go along with the annual sport — perhaps meekly suggesting, with a rationality which is entirely misplaced, that after all it is only one day in the calendar — you'll be doing yourself no good at all. They'll think that either you're a killjoy, and probably stingy to boot, or a selfish lotus-eater with no sense of 'family'.

This year we want a quiet day at home: just me and him and the kid — oh, and the telly. As they say when reporting summit talks, 'at the time of going to press' things are looking good. But it's been a close run thing. Reading from the chessboard of last year's moves, it was clear enough whom we were expected to invite this year. I suppose we could have escaped by leaving town altogether, but the prospect of self-imposed exile in a damp holiday cottage does not appeal. By mid October fate took a merciful hand (pens and paper may be useful here): the parents of the girl who is engaged to be married to the son of the woman who is my partner's father's lady friend has invited them all to come along and pull their crackers and wear their funny hats in some distant part of the realm.

We're saved. We can really look forward to our Christmas. My subconscious however is still on guard, as I discover when I find I have made a huge Christmas pudding. But our feelings of relief are quite out of all proportion: you'd think we'd just escaped from Dartmoor.

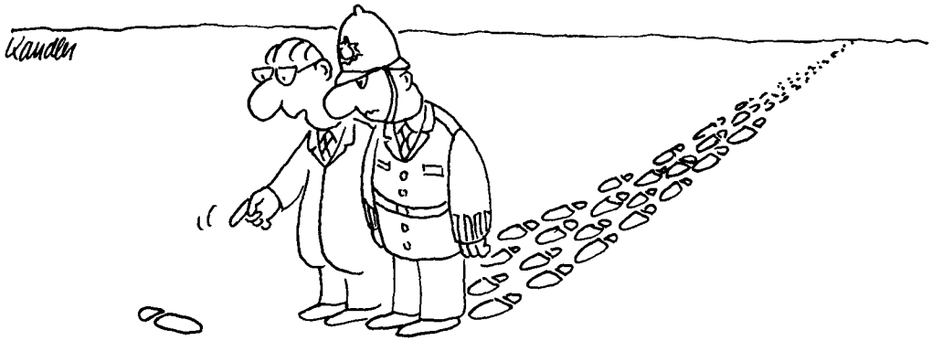
But what's this? Someone in another branch of the family has been doing their calculations. They've tumbled to it that we're going to be 'all on our own' for the 12 vital hours. Can't have that. The phone rings: 'Hello, what are you doing for Christmas?'

To utter the truth, 'Nothing, thanks, we're staying here,' is unthinkable, unforgiveable. It's an affront to the tribalism of the season (something which, by definition, excludes thousands of people who would dearly like to be invited to join in a Christmas dinner, but don't let's get moralistic about all this). 'Oh, do come,' they say. 'If you come, there'll be 14 adults and seven kids. It'll be chaos, of course, it always is though, isn't it!'

This business of numbers is a vital part of the myth. People just love to regale you with tales of past Christmases, when 27 people 'sat down to lunch' (what did they sit on, I always wonder: have *you* got 27 chairs in your house?). It was exhausting of course, they'll admit, but the kids enjoyed it all so much.

In fact, the more people there are and the more awful it is, the warmer the glow of family pride and martyrdom. While purporting to complain, really people are boasting. Gatherings of ten or less are hardly worth a mention in the stakes for the jolliest Christmas. And a mixture of pity and contempt is reserved for those who won't play. It's as my grandmother used to say: you may have to love your relatives but you don't have to like them. She was one of seven children and married a man who had 16 brothers and sisters.

As for next year, we're resigned to our fate. □



WINE

Tomes for topers

Stephen Brook

NOW THAT THE BRITISH, long a nation of wine connoisseurs, have become in addition a nation of wine guzzlers, publishers have responded with a flood of wine books. It is time to hand out some awards for the wine books of the year.

The Best: Tom Stevenson's **Champagne** (Sotheby's, £19.95) is one of those rare books that deserve to be called definitive. It's too encyclopaedic to be described as a good read, but anyone who regards Champagne as a serious tipple, as more than an occasional celebratory glass of froth, will find it indispensable. This is a lavish work of scholarship, packed with information, impeccably produced.

The Most Important: The truism that wine is made from grapes has been insufficiently recognised by writers. Somebody handed Jancis Robinson the inspired notion of devoting an entire book to grape varieties, and she has done so magnificently. The results, **Vines, Grapes, and Wines** (Mitchell Beazley, £16.95), is a triumph of book production as well as erudition. Robinson discusses 1,000 grape varieties in terms of their origin, their characteristics and their current distribution throughout the vineyards of the world. She also illustrates which varieties are grown where and explains why. Admittedly, the casual drinker will not want to know a great deal about Furmint or Zinfandel, but anyone with a serious interest in wine will find the book richly and rewardingly informative.

The Most Controversial: For some years Robert Parker, an American lawyer turned wine writer, has been moved to publish a journal evaluating a vast array of wines. In **Bordeaux** (Dorling Kindersley, £12.95) Parker assesses 2,000 top clarets. More controversially, he awards the wines

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marks out of 100. All wine tasters mark wines, usually out of 20, but Parker's fastidious evaluations have caused eyebrows to be raised, especially in this country. What precisely, some wine writers wanted to know when Parker bravely launched his book in our company some weeks ago, is the difference between a wine that scores 82 points and one that scores 84? His responses were not entirely satisfactory and readers should take such scoring with a pinch of salt. On the other hand, Parker is a serious and dedicated taster — he actually buys most of the wines he assesses — and his notes and his judgments are sound. He has had the courage to stick his neck out but has unfortunately been rewarded with the increasing misuse of his scores by lazy wine merchants and auctioneers to peddle their most expensive bottles.

Most Sumptuous: Until 31 December, £25 will buy you a copy of Richard Olney's *Yquem* (Dorling Kindersley). Thereafter, it's £30, almost as expensive as a bottle of this greatest of French white wines. A handsome volume indeed, and most beautifully illustrated, but all the crucial information about the property, the vinification and the vintages could have been compressed into 30 pages, so acres of paper have been devoted to photographs of vineyards, menus and recipes for truffled pig's trotters. Good reading, but scarcely good value.

Most Prolific Author: Steven Spurrier, the Englishman who had the temerity to open a wine shop and wine school in Paris, has issued no fewer than three books this autumn: **The Wine Cellar Book** (Collins, £9.95), **The Guide to French Wines** (Collins, £12.95) and a paperback reissue of the **Academie Du Vin Wine Course** (Century, £7.95). Forget the first two. The *Cellar Book* is grossly padded with interviews and gastronomical chitchat, simply because cellarage is too slender a topic to fill an entire book. The second of the trio is another rapid and selective tour of the vineyards, contributing little that's new. The *Wine Course*, however, is an admirable, serious yet approachable introduction to winemaking, from vineyard to vinification to bottling and tasting.

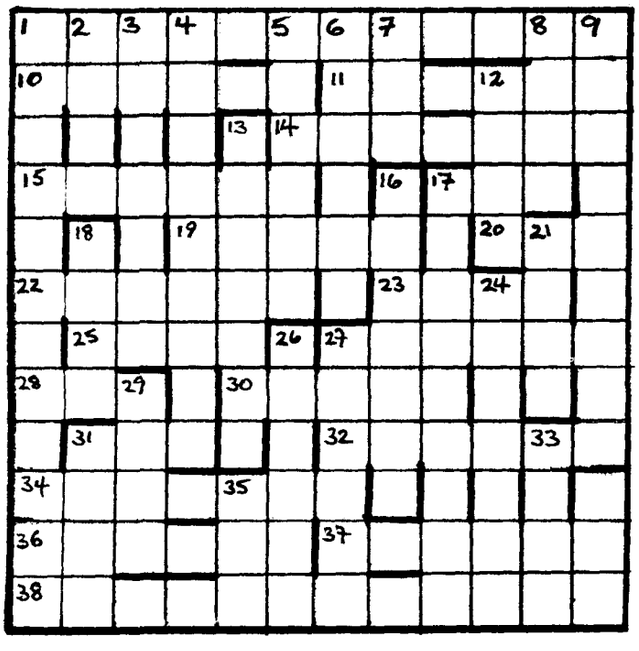
Most Amusing: Ronald Searle's collection of witty and incisive cartoons **Something in the Cellar** (Souvenir, £8.95). The cartoon illustrating the South African Colourful Ceremony of Offering Limited Recognition to the Black Grape is alone worth the price of the book.

Most Disappointing: Much of the information in Hugh Johnson's **Atlas of German Wines** (Mitchell Beazley, £14.95) can be found, admittedly in less up-to-date form, in his

Salamanca 114

'Celebration: —— for ———'

PRIZE: £35 cheque for the first correct solution opened. Entries to Salamanca 114, New Statesman, 14-16 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU, by first post 23 December*.



Single answers must be adjusted in the same way before entry, and these show my ——— for ———. Others are normal but clued as opposite couples, each clue consisting of two definitions in order, subsidiary indications treating the two answers taken together.

Name_____

Address_____

_____

_____

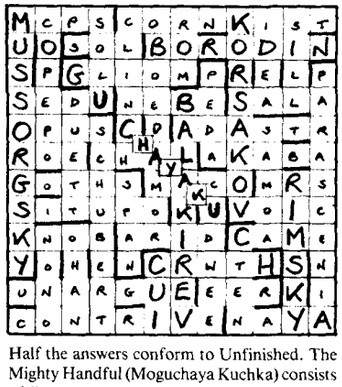
ACROSS

1 Tufts with squared base spread over lowest part of head? (11)
10, 37 Eccentric sign telling winter to lay off river dam? (6) (6)
11, 36 Burst snare let lion out free, leaving confusion within (6) (6)
14, 34 Firework in gutter — see round chimney-pot over smoky atmosphere — I'm fleeing the danger (7) (7)
15, 32 Narrow lane, level one built in a curve perhaps, lively (6) (6)
17, 31 Trough (part of atmosphere, say) showing extremes in twenty existing areas (3) (3)
19, 30 Later expression of pleasure thus shown when tucking into middle portion of cold bird (no more left!) (5) (5)
20, 28 In veld I'm chopping wood, see, short (3) (3)
22, 27 See old gloves with oil on palms — we're in the sea (6) (6)
23, 25 Crowd a long time sheltering in great stormy blow (4) (4)
38 It may aid BOAC owner that's lost direction flying (11)

DOWN

1 Public officer with red brows beetling, holding the attention (11)
2, 33 Little foreign chap that's odd climbing in country tree (4) (4)
3, 24 Flap on Atlantic; ice, see is right dodgy; one's broken in — this vessel? (7) (7)
4 Bashes without drawing blood yet (bard's coining) (8)
5 Dew on web? Notice this in nearly the highest perfection (5)
6 The charm of being enchanted and holding first place in all (5)
7, 35 With pair of wings here's Russian boatman possibly giving joyous cry for one creek (3) (3)
8, 31 Take food in cheek, needing a chew (4) (4)
9 Heartless men steer boat at sea assailed by bad weather (11)
12, 29 You would get involved in settlement that's behind — our tax system, insane? (4) (4)
13, 16 Bad reaction likely to recur when everything's grey, perhaps — another way of putting poetic work? (7) (7)
17 A better sort of architectural roof built in without arches or vaults? (8)
18, 21 Fine limo goes in for servicing — you need walking equipment! (4) (4)
26 The most important thing one's kept in a kind of jar? (5)
27 Disturbance caused by comic (5)

Solution to Salamanca 113



Half the answers conform to Unfinished. The Mighty Handful (Moguchaya Kuchka) consists of five composers.

Prizewinner to Salamanca 113

Dr R. J. & Mrs K. P.Bell
(Hampton, Middx)

***Note: Salamanca will next appear in our Christmas double issue (19/26 December) but the solution to S114 will be published with Salamanca 116 on 2 January 1987.**

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admirable *Wine Companion*. For the devotee of German wine the gazetteer of all 2,500 individual vineyards is invaluable, but where the book is a let-down is in the quality of the atlas itself. The maps are actually inferior to those in his worldwide *Wine Atlas* and not even the major estates are pinpointed. As a work of reference the book is to be welcomed, but, as a practical guide to visiting the wine regions of Germany, it is less than adequate.

Most Useful: The 1987 edition of Hugh Johnson's **Pocket Wine Book** (Mitchell Beazley, £4.95); yet again the indispensible *vade mecum*.

Most Prolix: Pamela Vandyke Price must be weary of being called the doyenne of British wine writers, but she is certainly prolific. Her latest volume, **French Vintage** (Harrap, £10.95), whisks us round a few favourite properties in various parts of France. The gushiness of the style can be tiring but it reflects a genuine enthusiasm and she certainly provides a wealth of information, even if it seems garnered and distributed in somewhat random fashion.

Most Needed: Two affordable paperbacks surveying the increasingly impressive Australian wine industry: James Halliday's **Australian Wine Guide** (Angus & Robertson, £9.95) and Oliver Mayo's **The Wines of Australia** (Faber, £6.95).□

Weekend competition

No 2953 **Set by E. O. Parrott**

What song, exactly, *did* the Sirens sing? You are asked to surmise, in max. 12 lines, by Wednesday 17 December. And, again, the very best entry will be awarded an extra prize: the new, chess-like (but easier) game 'Artificial Intelligence', available to those who can't wait from AI Games, Victory Works, Birds Hill, Letchworth, Herts (at the special *NS readers price of £15 incl. p&p*).

No 2950 **Set by E. O. Parrott**

Which-type reports on various sexual activities.

Report **By Ms de Meaner**

When one considers what you might have done (indeed, what some of you *did* do) with this, one can only exhale a sigh of relief at the (in general) exquisite taste, panache and wit of your entries. I'm surprised that so few of you mentioned cats . . . Ah well, perhaps that's just as it should be: Tabitha and I quite often find that our pleasures aren't vulgarly shared . . . Where was I? Yes, a tenner to each winner; with a Special Mention to Mrs J. Martin for the jaw-dropping width of her vocabulary.

Our Best Buy is the insubstantial but surprisingly reliable **Erotic Fantasy**. Unlike the cheaper *Wet Dream*, it is completely portable and can be used at any time of night or day, in all circumstances. The Board Meeting test gave it a clear advantage over the *Suggestive Nudge*, whose results (see Table) are unpredictable. The Taxi test proved the *Erotic Fantasy* less popular with male testers than the *Bird In Hand*, but females liked it for the way it left men safely outside on the pavement.

It scored an impressive row of zeros in the Faults section, coming top in Accidental Procreation, Post-coital Quarrels and Sudden Headaches. It narrowly beat Pornography for Large Things and, unlike any other model, was 100% successful in Fabulous Achievement. It failed only in the Bedwarmer test, which was won hands down by *Dogged Humping*. It is, however, totally proof against Aids, herpes and loss of self-esteem.

ALISON PRINCE

Soixante-neuf: our researchers generally found this to be a simple and satisfactory procedure but, in some cases, especially where age or corpulence was a problem, medical advice needed to be sought. In two instances there was subsequent difficulty in removing pubic hair from the teeth.

Bestiality: There is little doubt that dogs are the most willing and appropriate partners, but it was generally found that most animals show little concern for their partner's pleasure.

Masturbation: The all-round 'best-buy' — cheap, user-friendly and offering a satisfaction rate of almost 100%.

BASIL RANSOME-DAVIES

Fantasising: no physical side-effects, but very time-consuming. Advantages include absolutely unrestricted choice of partner and no risk of VD, pregnancy or bereavement.

Fellatio: this one was disliked by gourmets on our panel and wholefooders were unenthusiastic. Not recommended for those with long noses, false teeth, or with hungry non-vegetarians.

Flagellation: problems of discomfort and Aids risk, and MPs might find some unfavourable electoral reaction to this one. Conservationists on the panel criticised the excessive use of leather by practitioners. Advantages include the illusion of having had an expensive education.

Frotteurism: advantages: as in *Fantasising* (q.v.). Disadvantages: heavy dry-cleaning bills and a chronic tendency to emerge from buses, lifts, etc., not looking your best. High risk of toes being stamped on, face slapped, etc., especially for small men.

CYNTHIA HALL

With so many experts offering advice on sexual matters, from Playboy to Lord Whitelaw, our testers were hard put to it to come up with a satisfying selection; but, after exhaustive (and exhausting) tests, they have made their final choice of activities which exclude conventional coupling.

Shaking hands: *A firm grip and a meaningful exchange* of glances can prove a stimulating experience, especially if you're a Freemason. Pleasure is only slightly reduced by the wearing of woollen gloves. (Worth thinking about.)

Dancing: This can be practised in public without offending even the most sensitive onlooker. Most testers said they liked to come, dancing. (Recommended.)

The Maitland Method, or Olga's Joy (*Best climax*): Watching newsreels of the Hiroshima bomb, or similar, produces the most exquisite sensation, partly because of the mushroom-shaped cloud (though this was strongly denied by feminist testers). All testers said they felt the earth move.

NAOMI MARKS

Our representative sample of white, middle-class heterosexuals tried out the new SAFER-SEX guide-lines . . .

Reduce number of sexual partners: Most of our sample only *had* one sexual partner at a time. Further reduction did limit satisfaction, but eliminated arguments about who was hogging the duvet afterwards.

Avoid oral sex: Many participants thought oral sex was talking dirty. It seemed unnecessarily cruel to introduce them to the theory and deny them the practice.

Use lubricants: A wide range were fully endorsed, from KY to 3-in-1, which markedly reduced creaking bedsprings.

Avoid exchanging bodily fluids: Some uncertainty as to whether they remained fluids once they had started to congeal. We had to explain it was safe to share post-coital cigarettes.

The safety-pin emblem of safer sex: Once introduced to the idea of the safety-pin, male participants found it far more convenient than the zip fly.

ANDY KIRBY

UNOFISHUL SKOOL MAG, VOL 2

Duzens of reders ansered our sizling sex queschunair! Now we dair to print the rezults!

i) *Wot do you think of masterbashin?*

Harf the sampel think it mene hiting masters on the hed, how thik can you get?? The uther harf sa it make you blined eksetera eksetera. As any fule no, its just sex with sumboddy you luv joke joke.

ii) *Wot is yore faverit fantersy?*

Matron feecherd hily, allong with skool porige, sik bay and wips. Wot purvurts! No wunder fine skools like St Custard's, ha ha v. funny, get a bad name!

iii) *Hav you ever kist a gurl?*

Most sa yuk not likly, Fotherington-Thomas bad enuf! Fules! Suffistikated tipes no all chaps like kissing gurls evencherly — exept F-T who sa hes glad to be gay.

iv) *Wud you like fuking?*

For thik reders, this mene stiking yore wily in sumboddy els. Yes — 0% No — 92% Dont no — 28%.

PETER NORMAN

For brevity, our comments on the main systems tested use KS classification numbers. (For full specifications, see the appropriate section of the Kama Sutra).

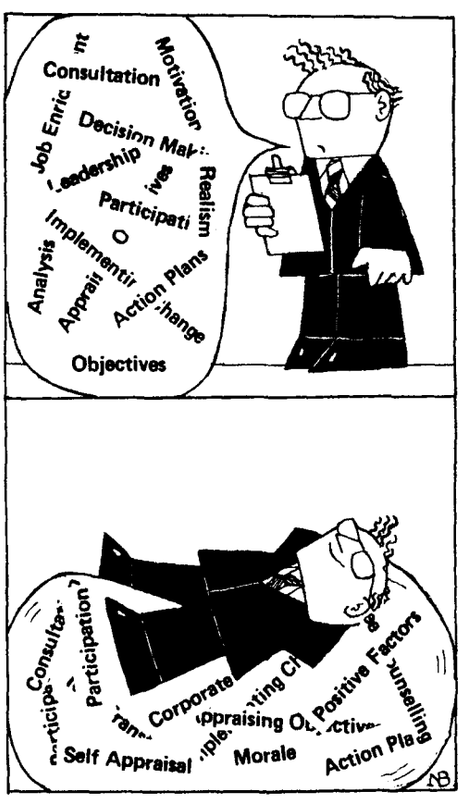
KS1: Our testers found this user-friendly and ergonomically well designed, but some reported that it tended to wear thin after about 5,000 cycles.

KS13: The lab staff simply could not get the hang of this, despite following the maual exactly. One member commented, 'If the maker intended this, he misplaced either the yoni or the lingam.' Worth Thinking About for the mechanically minded.

KS33: This also took a good deal of manoeuvring to assemble, but once in place it was a remarkably integrated structure. Good Value except for interruptus enthusiasts.

KS73: Unsafe at any speed.

NOEL PETTY



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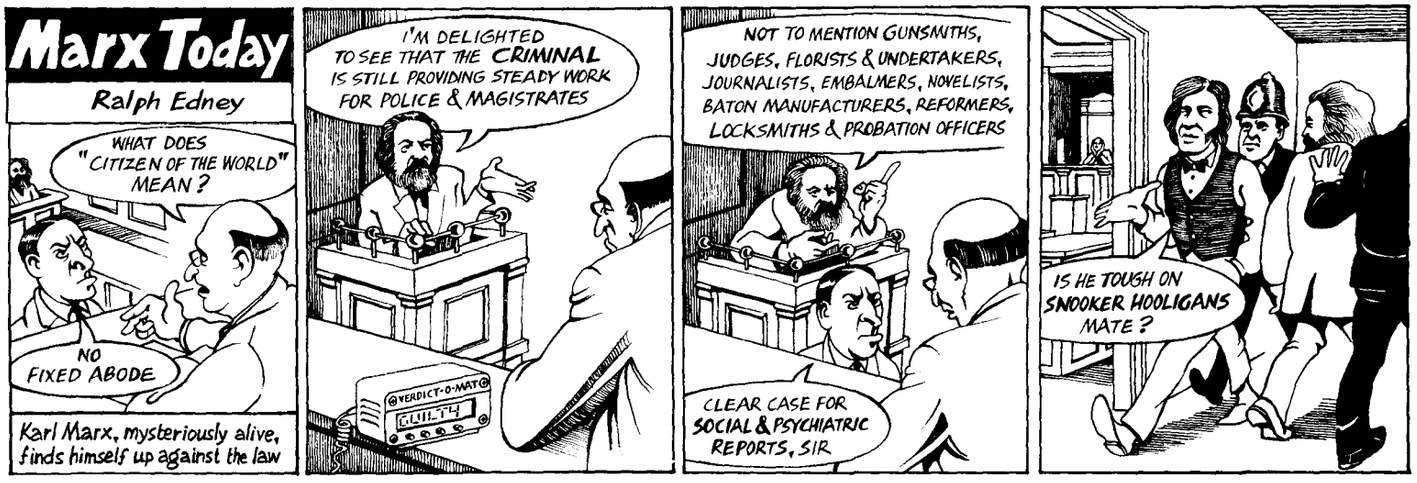
Marx Today
Ralph Edney
WHAT DOES "CITIZEN OF THE WORLD" MEAN?
NO FIXED ABODE
Karl Marx, mysteriously alive, finds himself up against the law
I'M DELIGHTED TO SEE THAT THE CRIMINAL IS STILL PROVIDING STEADY WORK FOR POLICE & MAGISTRATES
VERDICT-O-MAT
GUILTY
NOT TO MENTION GUNSMITHS, JUDGES, FLORISTS & UNDERTAKERS, JOURNALISTS, EMBALMERS, NOVELISTS, BATON MANUFACTURERS, REFORMERS, LOCKSMITHS & PROBATION OFFICERS
CLEAR CASE FOR SOCIAL & PSYCHIATRIC REPORTS, SIR
IS HE TOUGH ON SNOOKER HOOLIGANS MATE?

Chess

WHAT I REALLY need for Christmas is a crystal ball. It's the only device that could cope with the curse of the weeklies — everything important happens while they're being printed. Case in point is that as I write this the Olympiad is in full swing. So, by the rule of jinx, I need only say that this is England's best ever performance and that we're going for gold in order to ensure a disastrous collapse in the closing rounds.

107 countries are playing in Dubai, which is a record for chess Olympiads and I would imagine also a record for any form of international sporting congress. All that the Scandinavian boycott proved (if one can speak of a boycott at all in these circumstances) is that sympathy for Israel is in short supply. The Danish and Swedish federations will probably regret having wasted their record of being the only countries to have participated in all 26 previous Olympiads on what has turned out to be a futile gesture.

Yet better not to come at all than to come and then refuse to play, as the Puerto Ricans did when paired against England in the first round. To grasp the point of their protest one must understand the way in which first round pairings are made in a Swiss system event. The contestants are ranked in order of ratings (average ratings for a team tournament) and then the organisers draw a line across the middle and pair the top team in the upper half against the top team in the lower half, second upper against second lower, etc. So if you are at the bottom of the upper half you can go rabbit-bashing, but if you're at the top of the lower half you get fed to the lions. The Puerto Ricans claimed that an incorrect rating had been used for one of their players, which made the difference between a bottom-upper and a top-lower ranking. What this boiled down to was that they thought they should have been playing Yemen (seeded 106) rather than England (seeded 2). As the Puerto Ricans insisted that it was rabbit pie or nothing for them, they got nothing and England scored a 4-0 walkover.

The early rounds are a sorting process in which the cream rises to the top, a sump of weakness coagulates at the bottom, and in between the middling teams shuttle about in a seething mass. In the serious matches between the main contenders England beat Hungary, the USA and Yugoslavia and scored a fighting 2-2 draw against the USSR, which was splendid stuff. Even so, one would have thought that in Kasparov, Karpov, Sokolov, Yusupov, Vaganian and Tseshkovsky the Soviet Union had a team that was a banker for the gold medals. But when Kasparov, of all people, lost to Seirawan they suffered an embarrassing $1\frac{1}{2}$-$2\frac{1}{2}$ defeat at the hands of the USA.

That put England clear at the top of the table and prompted a *Guardian* leader (25 November) that began with the words: 'It is worth saying now (in case nemesis intervenes in the remaining rounds) that Britain's performance so far in the chess Olympics in Dubai has been outstanding: one of the country's best performances in leisure activities anytime, anywhere.' Leisure activity? I must remember that next time my brains are in danger of getting curried in a time-scramble. That categorisation does tend to obscure the point that England's success owes a lot to the fact that the team of Miles, Nunn, Short, Chandler, Speelman and Flear is a fully professional side. Their participation in Dubai is being sponsored by Duncan Lawrie, a banking firm.

I suspect the *Guardian* leader writer of experimenting with some prototype crystal ball since nemesis came that very afternoon in the shape of the Spanish team. On the ratings one would expect England to make something like 3-1 against Spain. The score was $3\frac{1}{2}$-$\frac{1}{2}$ the other way. A protest has been lodged that this score was not fairly achieved because the Spanish players were assisted during play by their Soviet coach Georgadze. This is a serious charge because it can be both very tempting and not too difficult to offer advice while the game is in progress. And of course it is completely illegal. Article 15 of the official Laws of Chess expressly prohibits 'recourse to the advice or opinion of a third party, whether solicited or not'. Breaches of this rule can be penalized by loss of the game, but controllers would normally restrict themselves to a stern warning for a first offence. I don't think that David Anderton, the English captain, can hope to extract anything more than that from the disaster of the tenth round. Will England be able to recover from this setback? Or rather will they have, by the time you read this?

More on the Olympiad next week. In the meantime, what do you think of this game?

Hindle-Povah, Peterborough, 11 September 1986. Sicilian Defence.
1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 e6 3. d4 cxd4 4. Nxd4 Nf6 5. Nc3 Nc6 6. Ndb5 d6 7. Bf4 e5 8. Bg5 a6 9. Na3 b5 10. Bxf6 gxf6 11. Nd5 f5 12. g3 Rg8 13. exf5 Bxf5 14. Bg2 e4 15. 0-0 Bg7 16. c3 Ne5 17. Nc2 Bg4 18. f3! exf3 19. Bxf3 Bxf3 20. Rxf3 Nxf3 + 21. Qxf3 Be5 22. Nce3 Qg5 23. Rf1 Ra7 24. Nf5 h5 25. Re1 Kf8 26. Qf2 Rb7 27. Rxe5! dxe5 28. Qc5 + Ke8 29. Qc8 + Qd8 30. Nd6 + 1-0.
It was played in the Raymond Mays Masters Quickplay Tournament and *White had only 10 minutes for the whole game.*

George Botterill

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This England

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☐ One hundred of the registered members of Smith's 800-strong Manorial Society are new American lords, some of whom for a contribution of £1,000 have also become patrons of the National Domesday Committee. The committee's honorary chairman is again Mr Smith. 'We have hundreds of loonies writing to us and trying to get into the Manorial Society,' he says. 'But we don't accept everyone. We're a bit snooty, you know, like any club. If your face doesn't fit, you're not invited. You have to be an appropriate person.' — *Observer Magazine* (Mary Manners Simpson)

☐ Passengers on Slade Leisure Group holidays will be able to play bingo while flying to Malaga, Tenerife, Alicante, Faro and Palma over the Christmas holidays. — *The Times* (Leonard Cox)

☐ In an unprecedented court action, a British Rail station announcement system accused of being too loud and clear has been banned by Epsom magistrates. Local residents were driven to despair by the strident plummy tones intoning at all hours of the day and night: 'This is Epsom, this is Epsom. All change. This is Epsom'. The local residents knew perfectly well where they were, and as the voice escaped from the station confines to puncture the peaceful air of the surrounding town, they christened it Her Ladyship. — *The Times* (Derek Morgan)

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